ATTACHMENT J-2

RESPONSE LETTERS ON NOTICE OF PREPARATION (NOP), RESPONSE LETTERS ON SUPPLEMENTAL NOP, RESPONSE LETTERS ON NOTICE OF INTENT (NOI)

RESPONSES TO THE 2004 NOTICE OF PREPARATION

This attachment contains the following responses to the 2004 Notice of Preparation:

Responses from Interested Groups

- Cahuilla Tribal Environmental Office (November 24, 2004, 1 page)
- Center for Biological Diversity (December 15, 2004, 5 pages)
- Friends of the Northern San Jacinto Valley (December 20, 2004, 35 pages)
- Morongo Band of Mission Indians (November 2004, 1 page)
- San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society (December 13, 2004, 3 pages)
- Santa Ana Mountains Task Force and San Gorgonio Chapter, Sierra Club (December 20, 2004, 10 pages)
- San Gorgonio Chapter Sierra Club (December 20, 2004, 4 pages)
- Southern California Edison (December 20, 2004, 1 page)
- Southern California Edison (December 17, 2004, 1 page)



CAHUILLA TRIBAL ENVIRONMENTAL OFFICE

P.O. Box 391741 Anza, CA 92539 Ph: (951) 763-2631 Fax: (951) 763-2632 Email: cahuillae1@aol.com

November 24, 2004

Ms. Cathy Bechtel Riverside County Transportation Commission P.O. Box 12008 Riverside, CA 92502-2208

Re: Environmental Impact Report for the Mid County Parkway Corridor Project.

Dear Ms. Cathy Bechtel:

The Cahuilla Band of Indians shows no record of there being any cultural resources in this project area. We have no knowledge of any historical significance in this particular location. We strongly encourage that you have on site cultural monitors during construction of your project. If you have any questions, please contact us at the Cahuilla Tribal Environmental Office at (951) 763-2631 or via email Cahuillae1@aol.com.

Thank you for your concern.

Sincerely,

Sarah Leash

Environmental Officer

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TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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CALIFORNIA AND PACIFIC OFFICE

protecting and restoring natural ecosystems and imperiled species through science, education, policy, and environmental law

FACSIMILE	TRANSMITTAL SHEET
ro. Çathy Bechtel	PROM: Monica Bond
Riverside County Transportation Commission	DATE: 12/15/2004
FAX NUMBER (951) 787-7920	TOTAL NO. OF PAGES INCLUDING COVER: 5
PHONE NUMBER (951) 787-7141	
Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report for the Mid-County Parkway Project	
□ urgent X for review □ pleas	e comment
NOTES/COMMENTS:	

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RECEIVED IRVINE

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Monica Bond Staff Biologist

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Protecting endangered species and wild places through science, policy, education, and emironmental law

VIA FACSIMILE AND U.S. MAIL

December 15, 2004

Cathy Bechtel,
Director of Transportation Planning and Policy Development
Riverside County Transportation Commission
4080 Lemon St. 8th Floor
Riverside, CA 92502-2208
Ph: (951) 787-7141
Fax: (951) 787-7920
CBECHTEL@retc.org

Fhay Dam Federal Highway Administration 888 South Figueroa, Suite 1850 Los Angeles, CA 90017

Re: Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact
Report for the Mid-County Parkway Project

Dear Ms. Bechtel and Mr. Dam,

The Center for Biological Diversity ("the Center") is a non-profit, public interest environmental organization dedicated to the protection of native species and their habitats through science, policy, and environmental law. The Center has over 10,000 members throughout California and the United and environmental law. The Center has over 10,000 members throughout California and the United States, including in southern California. The Center submits the following comments on the Notice of Preparation ("NOP") of an Environmental Impact Statement and Environmental Impact Report ("EIS/EIR") for the Mid-County Parkway Project on behalf of our members, staff, and members of the public with an interest in protecting the native species and habitats of western Riverside County.

The Center is extremely concerned about Riverside County's plans to expand the existing Ramona Expressway and Cajalco Road into a six to ten-lane freeway. Of utmost concern is the location of the freeway through two endangered species preserves: Lake Mathews-Estelle Mountain location of the Lake Perris-San Jacinto Wildlife Area, both Core Reserves under the Western Riverside MSHCP. A large freeway traversing through the Lake Mathews-Estelle Mountain Core Reserve and running adjacent to the Lake Perris-San Jacinto Wildlife Area Core Reserve would threaten important running adjacent to the Lake Perris-San Jacinto Wildlife Area Core Reserve would threaten important populations of Stephen's kangaroo rats, California gnateatchers, and other federally and state protected species. We raised these concerns numerous times in our comments to the County on the MSHCP. These reserves were established as mitigation for take, and to compromise the biotic integrity of these reserves would violate the stipulations of prior plans.

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The environmental impacts of the Mid-County Parkway Project will be severe. The major impacts include but are not limited to: direct and indirect impacts to native species and to adjacent biological reserves in the region; impacts to air quality; and the project's contribution to population browth in the region. Following are specific issues the Center believes must be addressed in the EIS/EIR under the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") and the National Environmental Policy Act ("NEPA").

National Environmental Policy Act

NEPA's fundamental purposes are to guarantee that: (1) agencies take a "hard look" at the environmental consequences of their actions before these actions occur; and (2) agencies make the relevant information available to the public so that it may also play a role in both the decision-making process and the implementation of that decision. See, e.g. 40 C.F.R. § 1500.1. To assure transparency and thoroughness, agencies also must "to the fullest extent possible...[e]ncourage and facilitate public involvement" in decision-making. 40 C.F.R. § 1500.2(d). The EIS must also "[r]igorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives" to a proposed action. 40 C.F.R. § 1502.14(a). Specifically, NEPA requires that the preparing agency "[r]igorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives, and for alternatives which were climinated from detailed study, briefly discuss the reasons for their having been eliminated...[and d]evote substantial treatment to each alternative considered in detail including the proposed action so that reviewers may evaluate their comparative merits." 40 C.F.R. § 1502.14.

California Environmental Quality Act

An EIR is a detailed statement, prepared under CEQA, describing and analyzing the significant environmental effects of a project and discussing ways to mitigate or avoid those effects. 14 Cal Code regs § 15362. The purposes of an EIR are to provide decision-making bodies and the public with detailed information about the effect a proposed project is likely to have on the environment, to list ways in which the significant effects of a project might be minimized, and to indicate alternatives to the project. Pub. Res. Code § 21061. The following purposes have also been enumerated by California Courts: an EIR should provide disclosure of all relevant facts, should provide a balancing mechanism whereby decision makers and the public can weigh the costs and benefits of a project, should provide a means for public participation, should provide increased public awareness of environmental issues, should provide for agency accountability, and should provide substantive environmental protection.

A. The EIS/EIR Must Consider Direct and Cumulative Impacts to Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species and Movement

The EIS/EIR must address the direct and cumulative impacts from both construction and operation of the proposed Mid-County Parkway Project to threatened, endangered, and sensitive species within the project site and in the surrounding areas (including ecological reserves). The EIS/EIR must fully disclose and analyze impacts to any listed, candidate, or sensitive species, and discuss alternatives and enforceable mitigation measures to avoid, reduce, and mitigate impacts to the species. The EIS/EIR must also fully disclose and analyze impacts to sensitive vegetation types including coastal sage scrub and woodlands.

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The EIS/EIR must include an analysis of the direct impacts of lighting, roads, pollution, noise, and other edge effects from the enlarged road on biological resources within, adjacent to, and in the vicinity of the project site. The EIS/EIR must also analyze the effects of the project on wildlife movement between core reserves and other habitat areas. In addition, the EIR must include a detailed analysis of the cumulative impacts of this project together with other completed, current, and reasonably foreseeable development projects in the area, such as the Villages at Lakeview, Gavilan Hills, etc. If the direct and indirect impacts of the project on biological diversity cannot be reduced to less than significant, the Center urges the County to deny the project.

B. The EIS/EIR Must Consider Direct and Cumulative Impacts to Air Quality

Riverside County is a biological diversity hotspot, but the Riverside-San Bernardino County Region also suffers the most extreme adverse impacts of sprawl development of any region of the Country, as measured in a recent study by Smart Growth America. Vast numbers of species in our region are at risk of extinction or extirpation from development and other activities, including transportation corridors such as the Mid-County Parkway. The region (including the Los Angeles-Riverside-San Bernardino-Orange counties metropolitan area) also ranks the worst in ozone pollution in the nation, largely due to vehicle exhaust. Recent scientific studies have found that children in the Inland Empire suffer high rates of permanent lung damage from vehicle pollutants. These potentially significant impacts must be discussed in the EIS/EIR, and avoidance measures and mitigations be proposed to reduce this impact to less than significant. If this impact cannot be reduced to less than significant, the Center urges the County to deny this project.

C. The EIS/EIR Must Consider the Project's Growth-Inducing Impacts

The proposed project is located in a rural area that is of great importance to threatened, endangered, and sensitive plants and wildlife. The region already suffers from severe traffic and air quality problems. The project will contribute significantly to all these problems. The EIS/EIR must fully disclose and analyze the growth-inducing impacts of this project, and discuss alternatives and effective mitigation measures to avoid, reduce, and mitigate these impacts. This impact was not mentioned in the NOP for the project.

D. The EIR/EIS Must Objectively Analyze a Range of Feasible Alternatives

The NOP for the project outlines eight potential Project Alternatives. The DEIS/EIR must objectively analyze these alternatives, particularly the no-action alternative. NEPA stipulates that agencies "rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives" to the proposed project. NEPA documents must discuss alternatives to the proposed action and "provid[e] a clear basis for choice among options by the decisionmaker and the public." 40 C.F.R. 1502.14; see also 42 U.S.C. § 4332(2)(E); 40 C.F.R. 1507.2(d), 1508.9(b). The Council on Environmental Quality, which wrote the NEPA regulations, describes the alternatives requirement as the "heart" of the environmental impact statement. 40 C.F.R. 1502.14. The purpose of this requirement is to insist that no major federal project should be undertaken without intense consideration of other more ecologically sound courses of action, including no action. "The existence of a viable but unexamined alternative renders an environmental impact statement inadequate." Alaska Wilderness Recreation & Tourism v. Morrison, 67 F.3d 723, 729 (9th Cir. 1995).

Furthermore, an EIR is required to describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, which would feasibly attain most of its basic objectives but would avoid or substantially lessen its significant effects. Cal Code Regs § 15126.6(a). The County has a substantive duty to adopt feasible, environmentally superior alternatives. Pub. Res. Code § 21002, Cal Code Regs §§ 15002(a)(3), environmentally superior alternatives. Pub. Res. Code § 21002, Cal Code Regs §§ 15002(a)(3), 15021(a)(2). A lead agency cannot abdicate this duty unless substantial evidence supports a finding that the alternative is infeasible. See, e.g., Citizens of Goleta Valley v. Board of Supervisors (1988) 197 Cal.App.3d 1167, 1181.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on the DEIS/EIR for the Mid-County Parkway Project. Please do not hesitate to contact the Center with any questions, at (951) 961-7720. We look forward to reviewing any further environmental documentation on this project.

Sincerely,

Monica L. Bond, M.S.

Staff Biologist

Center for Biological Diversity

morieca L. Bond

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FRIENDS OF THE NORTHERN SAN JACINTO VALLEY P.O. Box 9097 Moreno Valley, CA 92552-9097

20 December 2004

Ms. Cathy Bechtel
Riverside County Transportation Commission
4080 Lemon Street, 3rd floor
P.O. Box 12008
Riverside CA 92502-2208

DEC 2 0 2004

RIVERSIDE COUNTY

TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. Tay Dam, Senior Transportation Engineer Federal Highway Administration—Los Angeles Metro Office 888 South Figueroa, Suite 1850 Los Angeles CA 90017

Dear Ms. Bechtel and Mr. Dam:

Re: Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Mid County Parkway Project.

The following are comments, suggestions, or concerns the Friends of the Northern San Jacinto Valley have regarding the potential environmental impacts related to the Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Mid County Parkway Project (The Project).

As a way of introduction, the Friends have been working since 1991 to preserve and protect the northern San Jacinto Valley which is home to the 19,000 acre state-owned San Jacinto Wildlife Area (SJWA), seasonal wetland known as Mystic Lake, and the Potrero Creek Conservation Unit. The wildlife area is located on the southeast border of Moreno Valley, Riverside County, California between Moreno Valley and the city of San Jacinto.

The Friends would like to request that the Environmental Impact Statement and Environmental Impact Report for The Project be written in a clear, logical, well-organized format that the average person can understand.

COMMENTS:

DEFINE PARKWAY:

In order to adequately comment on The Project we need to have a clear description and definition of the term "parkway".

What are the characteristics of a parkway?

What is the difference between a parkway and a freeway?

Does a parkway include freeway style entrances and exits?

What future expansions to the parkway are planned?

AIR QUALITY:

As you know, Riverside County residents are now subject to some of the worst air in the world which not only causes the unnecessary death and disease of many thousands of people but also accelerates the demise of endangered species. The Draft EIS/EIR must address not only the increase in human mortality caused by the

cumulative and growth inducing impacts of a new freeway, but also the impacts to endangered species who are subject to rapidly increasing air pollution.

Air quality is not a significant impact for which a "finding of over riding consideration" can morally be made.

ALTERNATIVES:

The necessity for the project must be analyzed in conjunction with the "no project analysis". In light of the fact that many of our natural resources are at the point of exhaustion, new growth in Riverside County may have reached its end point. Therefore, each of these growth limiting factors must be analyzed in order to justify the practical reality of new growth and therefore the need for yet another new freeway.

First, as the minimum amount of land which is required under the MSHCP to preserve endangered species in Riverside County has already been identified, where is the land available to mitigate for the inevitable impacts to established preserves, such as the San Jacinto Wildlife Area, the Lake Mathews Reserve and other already established MSHCP lands?

Second, the impacts of global warming as they relate to endangered species and to water supply must be analyzed. If species are "blinking out" because of global warming, how can more habitats be destroyed by growth? If there is not enough affordable water for homes and businesses, how can a new freeway be needed or justified?

Third, the impacts of rapidly rising oil prices must be addressed. When, as is clearly documented and acknowledged (see www.peakoil.com) that oil and natural gas supplies will peak within this decade and fuel prices will become unaffordable, the Draft EIS/EIR must include analysis and discussion of: How will people afford the costs of fuel to go to work? How many jobs which depend on fossil fuel powered transportation (boats, planes, trucks) will there be? How can we justify destroying habitat to build a new freeway, new homes and new businesses when fuel costs will make them unaffordable?

The light rail/public transportation alternatives must be discussed and analyzed in the Draft EIS/EIR to accommodate future fuel shortages.

Fourth, since building a new freeway does not appear to be justified, the Draft EIS/EIR must discuss and analyze the simple alternative of widening the Ramona Expressway, Cajalco Road and El Sobrante Road to no more than four lanes of traffic with safe right and left turn lanes and other safety improvements. This alternative must be thoroughly addressed.

BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES:

Our primary biological concern regarding the Mid County Parkway Project is its potential to destroy the biological viability of the two existing wildlife conservation areas located within the transportation corridor study area. The state operated San Jacinto Wildlife Area is located immediately east of Lake Perris and the Lake Mathews Multi-Species Conservation Area was established on the public lands surrounding Lake Mathews. Both of these public land areas were recently included as "conserved lands" in the newly enacted Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) approved by the County of Riverside, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the State of California (see attached article, "Species Plan Wins State, Federal OKs", The Press-Enterprise, June 23, 2004). We are requesting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Biological Opinion prepared for this project pursuant to Section 7 of the federal Endangered Species Act be included in the Draft EIS/EIS for public review and inspection.

The project clearly has the potential to directly impact these important wildlife conservation lands. Perhaps more importantly, the indirect impacts of the project on the long term biological viability of these lands deserves a rigorous analysis and detailed mitigation planning. The impacts of future Parkway vehicle noise and lights, for example, will extend far into these wildlife conservation areas and severely impact the viability of these lands

for many of the 146 species included in the MSHCP. The Draft EIS/EIR therefore needs to provide specific mitigation measures to avoid or eliminate these indirect impacts. In that regard, we have included a recent article titled <u>Degraded Darkness</u> (Conservation in Practice, Vol. 5. No. 2/2004) which chronicles the potential for artificial night lights to undermine wildlife conservation efforts.

The Mid County Parkway will generate substantial stormwater pollution potentially impacting the San Jacinto River and Lake Mathews. Pursuant to the federal Clean Water Act, the project will require a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. Our concern is the Mid County Parkway will generate substantial water pollutants impacting the San Jacinto River floodplains on the San Jacinto Wildlife Area as well as Lake Mathews, severely degrading both these water bodies. The Water Quality Management Plan required as part of the NPDES permit therefore should be sufficiently detailed and included within the Draft EIS/EIR for public review and inspection.

We are also concerned the Mid County Parkway will require the elevation of the existing Ramona Expressway crossing at the San Jacinto River between Nuevo and Bernasconi Road. This will require the filling of the San Jacinto River floodplain, reducing flood storage capacity of the Mystic Lake ponding area (Riverside County Flood Control Plan) and consequently backing up future flood water on endangered species habitats previously reserved for the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat. The extent to which floodplain alteration will impact MSHCP species as a result of this project warrants a complete analysis. Endangered plant impacts are a particular concern and deserve appropriate consideration and a complete analysis.

The Federal Highway Act of 1968 provides the Secretary of Transportation may approve transportation projects requiring the use of publicly owned land only if:

1) There is no prudent and feasible alternative to using that lands; and

2) The project includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the park, recreation area, wildlife and waterfowl refuge or historic site resulting from the use.

We are particularly concerned the project alternative analysis includes consideration of project alternatives which will require the taking of public lands at the San Jacinto Wildlife Area, including the wildlife area lands located in front of the Lake Perris Dam, as well as the public lands of the Lake Mathews Multiple Species Conservation Area. Alternative 3 (north of Lake Mathews and south of Perris) clearly provides a prudent and feasible alternative to using these publicly owned lands designated for wildlife conservation. The Draft EIS/EIR alternative analysis needs to demonstrate how the recently completed Riverside County Integrated Project (RCIP) effort to integrate transportation planning (CETAP) with long term wildlife conservation planning (MSHCP) will be brought to fruition. Alternative 3 will minimize impacts to both of the established wildlife conservation areas and therefore warrants meaningful consideration in the environmental document.

We are also concerned the Mid County Parkway will result in numerous cumulative impacts and will clearly be growth inducing. The cumulative impact analysis included in the Draft EIS/EIR needs to address the extent to which development projects that will follow the Parkway will impact both the San Jacinto Wildlife Area and the Lake Mathews MSHCP. The cumulative impact analysis needs to identify specific mitigation measures to be included in the project approval to avoid and/or minimize detrimental impacts to these established wildlife conservation areas.

We are particularly concerned regarding the three (3) proposed interchanges recommended on the southern boundary of the San Jacinto Wildlife Area in the Lakeview-Nuevo area. It is clearly foreseeable this number of interchanges will impact future land use immediately adjacent to the wildlife area. Moreover, we are concerned the Parkway design may engender the future construction of a north-south roadway through the San Jacinto Wildlife Area to connect Highway 60 to the new Mid County Parkway. The cumulative impact analysis needs to examine modification and/or elimination of these interchanges at this location to avoid foreseeable impacts to wildlife conservation, stormwater pollution and storage, and the loss of prime agricultural land.

COMMUNITY IMPACTS:

The impacts to all of the rural communities (such as Nuevo, Mead Valley which the new freeway will potentially divide in two) must be analyzed. It is clear that a new freeway is needed only because general plan/zoning changes are contemplated which are not yet known to the public. Therefore, a transparent analysis must be made of the land use changes which are contemplated by the County.

First, how many new houses will be served by this freeway? How many vehicles will those houses produce?

Second, how many new businesses will be served by this freeway? How many trucks will those businesses produce?

Third, how much land currently in MSHCP criteria areas will be destroyed or impacted by the growth produced by this new freeway?

Fourth, what future land use/zoning changes are planned by the County on lands adjacent to the proposed Project?

How will the project accelerate urbanization throughout the project area?

How will future urbanization affect the San Jacinto Wildlife Area and the management of the wildlife area?

How does The Project affect the jobs-to-housing balance in Riverside County?

How much housing will result from The Project?

How many jobs will result from The Project?

How many warehouses will result from The Project?

How much traffic in local communities will result from The Project?

How much diesel pollution will be produced as a result of The Project?

FLOODPLAIN EVALUATION: The Draft EIS/EIR document needs to provide a complete and detailed analysis of the effects of developing a major transportation corridor in known floodplains.

How will locating the parkway/freeway in floodplains affect the cost, location, maintenance, liability costs, and rebuilding costs of The Project?

How many acres of wetlands will be destroyed due to The Project?

How will the loss of wetlands habitat (meeting the federal mandate of No Net Loss of wetlands) be mitigated? What endangered plants and animals will be affected? What will be the mitigation for the loss of these endangered species?

What is the cost analysis of potential financial losses due to flooding? (Loss of homes, destruction of

infrastructure, and damage to the parkway/freeway?) What is the cost analysis to replace and/or repair The Project due to damage by flooding?

How does this project reflect the federal government's mandate to reduce urbanization in known floodplains? How many natural springs and vernal pools will be destroyed by The Project?

What will be the mitigation for their loss?

How will wildlife be affected by the loss of these natural springs and natural waterways?

Will future homes built in floodplains require that homeowners purchase flood insurance? How much will it

Is it cost effective to build a parkway/freeway in floodplains?

The Draft EIS/EIR needs to do a compete and detailed analysis of the potential for flooding where the San Jacinto River crosses the Ramona Expressway bordering the city of San Jacinto; it needs to provide a compete and detailed analysis of the potential for flooding where the San Jacinto River crosses the Ramona Expressway between Davis Road and the Bernasconi Hills. The document needs to incorporate and reflect the Department of Fish and Game's plans to complete the acquisition of Mystic Lake and its inclusion in the SJWA. How will elevating the roadway affect the SJWA?

Will it flood the SJWA? How does ACE/SAMP fit into the process?

GEOLOGY AND SOILS:

How will geology and soil types affect the location and construction costs of The Project? The Draft EIS/EIR needs to provide a complete and detailed analysis of the geology, geotechnical hazards and soil types. How many acres of prime agricultural lands will be lost? How will they be replaced?

We are attaching a copy of Dr. Michael A. McKibben's September 28, 2000, "Comments on draft Moreno Valley General Plan" to Mr. Jeff Specter, Associate Planner, City of Moreno Valley where he presents a detailed analysis of the geotechnical and hazard issues that need to be addressed in the San Jacinto Valley. We hereby incorporate his complete letter and its listed references as part of our comments.

HAZARDOUS WASTE:

What hazardous waste sites are located adjacent to or within the project sites? Are there perchlorate sites that need to be remediated along the project? Is MBTE found in groundwater and/or well water in the San Jacinto Valley and along the project site? How will it be remediated?

LIGHT POLLUTION:

Light pollution annoys and aggravates certain species of animals. The Draft EIS/EIR needs to analyze and discuss stringent standards to regulate light levels throughout the length of the project, in particular where it shares boundaries with habitat conservation areas such as the San Jacinto Wildlife Area, Lake Mathews Conservation Area and other MSHCP lands.

We hereby incorporate references found at the International Dark-Sky Association, 3225 N. First Avenue, Tucson, AZ 85719 web site (http://www.darksky.org/infoshts/istopic.html#1.10) as part of our comments. In particular we recommend the sections on light ordinances from other municipalities, examples of "good lighting"; recommendations for lighting fixtures.

The Draft EIS/EIR needs to provide a complete and detailed analysis of how light pollution sources will be minimized throughout the project.

NOISE POLLUTION:

How will noise pollution affect homeowners, residents, and wildlife?

Will noise walls be built in communities?

What will be the acceptable noise levels?

Will noise walls be constructed along the SJWA boundary and the proposed Lewis Homes project called The Villages of Lakeview planned in the communities of Lakeview/Nuevo?

Will there be walls between the parkway and houses?

Will there be walls between the Lewis Homes project and the SJWA?

Our preferred route would align the parkway in such a manner that: All development (Lewis Homes and others) will be located south of the roadway. Appropriate additional mitigation lands would be donated/acquired and at the same time the development of an Agriculture/Conservation Area with conservation easements binding in perpetuity would be established. This would preserve an appropriate and compatible land use adjacent to the San Jacinto Wildlife Area and also preserve the integrity of the facility's wildlife habitat.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND UTILITIES:

The proposal to build the parkway/freeway will certainly result in increased urbanization and demands on public services and utilities.

Who will pay for schools and maintaining them? What are the impacts to local school populations?

Who will pay for libraries? Who will pay for maintaining and expanding them as the population increases? Who will pay for parks? Who will maintain them and pay for new parks as the population increases? Who will pay for infrastructure (natural gas, electricity, water, flood control) improvements? The Draft EIS/EIR needs to provide a complete and detailed analysis of all local, state, and federal funding sources for infrastructure costs.

The Draft EIS/EIR needs to provide a complete and detailed analysis of all rate increases to utility users who are the ones who will ultimately subsidize the expansion of new infrastructure.

Who will fund and provide social services for the expanded population?

Who will fund after school and at risk children's services?

SECTION 4(1) RESOURCES:

Please see our discussion of this item within the "Biological Resources" Section.

TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC:

Since it is goes without saying that the "need" for the Mid County Parkway Project is to provide access for trucks traveling to and from the proposed March Air Cargo Port in Riverside from Orange County, the Port of Long Beach and other locations, and to accommodate the future growth of truck distribution centers, the Draft EIS/EIR needs to provide a complete and detailed analysis of diesel truck traffic levels between the all locales where trucks originate and the end-point of their routes.

The Draft EIS/EIR needs to provide a complete and detailed analysis of all traffic needs for all current, planned,

and future housing developments.

How will light rail, commuter trains, buses and other alternate forms of transportation be constructed to meet the demands for workers traveling out of the county to well-paying jobs and/or traveling within the county to jobs?

Will the parkway be "walled" on both sides?

Where will it be walled?

Will the communities/residents have input as to what areas are walled?

What kind of signage will be allowed?

What kind of codes will regulate signage?

What kind of billboards will be allowed?

Will clusters of oversized billboards be allowed along the parkway such as those found in Colton at the I-10 and I-215 interchange?

Who will approve the location of billboards, signs?

What kind of oversight will cities and the county be allowed in locating billboards/signs?

What kind of design guidelines will be included to preserve the wide range of community aesthetics?

Will native/drought tolerant landscaping be used?

What kind of design guidelines will be in place to preserve the natural drought tolerant landscaping? What kind of design guidelines will be used to mandate that water resources are conserved for landscape

What regulations will guide the placement of cell phone towers and other facilities that cause 'visual blight' along highways?

WATER RESOURCES:

The final project description must take into account how any road improvements will affect in any way the flow of the San Jacinto River. All impacts to the entire San Jacinto River watershed must be addressed in the Draft EIS/EIR. The San Jacinto River Watershed Council is preparing a San Jacinto River Watershed Management Plan which should be taken into account in the environmental review of any road construction within the watershed.

When the water quantity issues are addressed, the local water agency's report of availability also must include the water availability report of any and all sources of water (i.e. Metropolitan Water District) so that all

assumptions about future water availability can be analyzed by the public. These water quantity issues are important for the actual construction of the road and for the assumptions about future growth.

Water quantity issues are also important for determining whether a new freeway is in fact needed. If there is not enough affordable water to supply all the homes and businesses which are projected in the next 25 years, then there is no need for the freeway. This analysis must be done in order to justify the need for any of these alternatives.

SAFETY:

How will increased levels of traffic affect the safety of pedestrians, school children, and bicyclists? What are the funding sources from all government entities to increase traffic patrols and maintain safe traffic speeds and safety on the proposed highway?

How will increased levels of traffic on the proposed project and all adjacent roads reduce the number of fatal accidents in the county?

COUNTY TRAILS SYSTEM, PEDESTRIAN TRAFFIC, BICYCLE PATHS, HORSE TRAILS:

How will The Project affect the use of existing pedestrian walkways, bicycle paths, and horse trails? How will The Project affect the development of future pedestrian walkways, bicycle paths, and horse trails? How will The Project affect the County Trails Plan?

Will over and undercrossings for pedestrians, bicycles, horse trails be include in the project plans?

WILDLIFE CORRIDORS:

What wildlife corridors will be affected by The Project?

What will be the mitigation for the loss of wildlife corridors?

How will the loss of wildlife corridors affect the viability of the Riverside County Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan?

Will The Project include wildlife overpasses and undercrossings?

Will wildlife studies/surveys be done to analyze what routes are used by wildlife to travel to habitat? We hereby incorporate the following references and articles as part of our comments on The Project: Wildlife Crossing Computer model: http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/wildlifecrossings/computer.htm

Wildlife Crossing Toolkit: http://www.wildlifecrossings.info/beta2.htm

Attached is the following article "Animal Overpasses, Tunnels Offering Roadkill Remedy", National Geographic, May 12, 2004 featuring wildlife crossings in Southern California:

(http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2004/05/0512 animaloverpasses.html#main)

GILMAN SPRINGS ROAD:

How will The Project affect the development of Gilman Springs Road as a major transportation corridor? How will Gilman Springs Road be expanded?

What geotechnical hazards need to be addressed if Gilman Springs Road is expanded?

How will the complex fault system, slow moving landslides known as creep, collapsible soils and subsidence affect the development, construction costs, and maintenance costs of expanding this road?

Approximately two thousand (2,000) acres of Mystic Lake are now owned by the Department of Fish and Game and are part of the San Jacinto Wildlife Area.

How will storm water effluent and urban runoff from an expanded Gilman Springs Road affect the water quality of Mystic Lake? What effect will storm water effluent and urban runoff have on the wildlife values of Mystic Lake and the San Jacinto Wildlife Area?

How will the expansion of Gilman Springs Road affect the existing wildlife corridors between the San Jacinto Wildlife Area and The Badlands?

How many wildlife over and/or undercrossing will be constructed to connect the SJWA with the Potrero Creek Conservation Unit of the SJWA?

How will the expansion of Gilman Springs Road affect the management of the San Jacinto Wildlife Area? How will the expansion of Gilman Springs Road affect the Department of Fish and Game's plans to acquire properties that make up the eastern portion of Mystic Lake?

How will the expansion of Gilman Springs Road affect Riverside County's plans to complete wildlife corridors between the San Jacinto Wildlife Area and The Badlands as part of Riverside County's Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan?

FISCAL ANALYSIS:

The EIS/EIR document needs to provide a complete and detailed analysis of all costs that taxpayers will pay for developing this highway. The document needs to provide a complete and detailed analysis of: local, state, and federal funding sources; needs to discuss funding sources to maintain the highway.

The ElS/EIR document needs to include a complete and detailed discussion of the potential loss of Riverside County TUMF fees and how that loss will affect the funding of county roads. If developers and businesses building in Riverside County continue to circumvent the 'intent' of collecting TUMF fees, what effect will it have on future funding for roads?

We hereby incorporate into our comments the newspaper article "\$1 Billion in Road Fees May Be Lost in Riverside County", North County Times, December 15, 2004 which discusses the loss of county TUMF fees (http://www.nctimes.com/articles/2004/11/21/news/californian/21 33 5111 20 04.txt)

ACCURATE REPRESENTATION OF THE SJWA AND MYSTIC LAKE:

All documents, maps, descriptions in the EIS/EIR document need to outline the up-to-date boundaries of the San Jacinto Wildlife Area, Mystic Lake, Potrero Creek Conservation Unit. (Attached are two maps outline current boundaries.)

Wherever the Lake Perris State Recreation Area is used as a landmark, the San Jacinto Wildlife Area, Mystic Lake and Potrero Creek Conservation Unit boundaries also need to be illustrated. To exclude them is misleading.

The document should reflect all current acquisitions at the San Jacinto Wildlife Area by the State of California as approved by the state Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB).

For information on all current acquisitions, contact: Mr. Tom Paulek, Area Manager, San Jacinto Wildlife Area, P.O. Box 1254, Lakeview, CA 92567; telephone: (951) 928-0580 and FAX (951) 928-1196.

IN CONCLUSION:

The San Jacinto Wildlife Area plays a unique, superior, and central role in Riverside County's Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan. It will be a cornerstone preserve in the county's MSHCP. Since 1984, the State of California (i.e. the taxpayers) has spent over \$80 million of public funds to acquire sensitive wildlife habitat which makes up the San Jacinto Wildlife Area. As of 2004, the State has also acquired approximately 2,000 acres of Mystic Lake, 9,000 acres of Potrero Canyon and added these lands to the wildlife area. This investment has obviously appreciated in value in recent years.

We expect the Riverside County Board of Supervisors, Riverside County Transportation Agency, Riverside Conservation Agency, Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, and the California Department of Fish and Game "to do right" by the San Jacinto Wildlife Area because of the public's long-time financial investment in this facility.

The San Jacinto Wildlife Area, Mystic Lake and the Potrero Creek Conservation Unit:

- The San Jacinto Wildlife Area was established as partial mitigation for the loss of wildlife habitat which occurred during the construction of the State Water Project (which brings water from northern California to southern California).
- Provides extremely valuable wildlife habitat for endangered animals and plants.
- Tens and thousands of waterfowl and shorebirds winter in the northern San Jacinto Valley.
- Is a known resting point and/or overwintering site for migrating birds traveling along the Pacific Flyway.
- The northern San Jacinto Valley is considered a Significant Natural Area by the California Department of Fish and Game.
- The San Jacinto Wildlife Area is a "cornerstone preserve" in Riverside County's Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan.

Please keep us informed of all actions taken, all public meetings, and all documents regarding the planning and funding of the proposed Mid County Parkway Project.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,

ann L. Turner McKibben

Ann L. Turner-McKibben, President (951) 924-8150

e-mail: atmckibben@adelphia.net

Attachments:

Bowles, Jennifer, Eventov, Adam, 2004, Species Plan Wins State, Federal OKs; The Press-Enterprise, June 23, 2004.

Downey, Dave, 2004, \$1 Billion in Road Fees May Be Lost in Riverside County; North County Times,

December 15, 2004.

Harder, Ben, 2004, Degraded Darkness; Conservation in Practice, Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 21-27.

McKibben, Michael A., 2000, Comment on draft Moreno Valley General Plan; Personal Correspondence,

September 28, 2000.

Walker, Cameron, 2004, Animal Overpasses, Tunnels Offering Roadkill Remedy; National Geographic News, May 12, 2004.

2004 Boundary Map of the San Jacinto Wildlife Area

2004 Boundary Map of the Potrero Creek Conservation Unit, San Jacinto Wildlife Area

Supplemental		

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Degraded

It's tempting to assume that artificial night light distresses only a few exquisitely sensitive species. But mounting evidence suggests that disappearing darkness undermines our best conservation efforts.

By Bentalder

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The implications are far reaching and could ultimately link light pollution to water quality.

N A PAIR OF SWELTERING DAYS
one recent July, Sharon Wise
and her husband Bryant
Buchanan rigged strands of
white Christmas lights from
tree to tree in the wilderness of Virginia. No
nativity scene was in evidence, no plastic reindeer, and certainly no snow. Any neighbors the
couple might have impressed with their early
display of yuletide spirit were in distant Utica,
New York, where both biologists live and teach.

But the redback salamanders (Plethodon cinereus) that hide all day beneath the leaf litter of Mountain Lake Biological Station certainly took note of the couple's efforts. When the researchers and three of their students switched on the lights at sunset one evening, the nocturnal salamanders responded with the amphibian equivalent of pulling the covers over their heads. They waited an hour longer than usual to get up for breakfast.

That delay concerns Wise. Under normal conditions, she knows, the salamanders emerge soon after nightfall and forage for just a few hours. But artificial illumination from build-

ings, road lights, and distant urban glow increasingly bathes organisms that, like Mountain Lake's redbacks, have adapted to live in the dark.

Does a later start for the salamanders mean fewer nightly meals and fewer calories? Does that cut into their fertility or increase their mortality? What does it mean for the insects that the salamanders eat and for the predators that, in turn, eat them? Wise doesn't yet have answers. Nor do other researchers studying the incipient field of artificial light ecology have a full grasp on parallel questions about a broad range of organisms and ecosystems.

Nevertheless, as these scientists begin to assemble an understanding of the ecological consequences of artificial light, they are recognizing numerous impacts. A few examples—sea turtles, for instance, and migratory birds—may be familiar. Most are not.

Many of the effects of artificial light may resonate up and down food chains, dragging whole ecosystems into imbalance. And by modifying the playing field on which nocturnal organisms develop, interact, and reproduce, artificial light may sculpt not only their individual lives but also the biological evolution of their species. That, says Buchanan, "is the most overlooked of all of the potential ramifications of artificial light."

As scientists grapple with artificial light's effects, forward-thinking conservationists—and a handful of sympathetic developers and regulators—are working to integrate the infant discipline into their efforts to mitigate light's unnatural ecological impacts.

ATURAL DARKNESS, ONCE A GIVEN, HAS become an ecological resource of shrinking abundance. Everyone who has squinted into a street lamp or stated at lights visible through a window has experienced glare-light that strikes the eye directly rather than hitting the object it's intended to illuminate. Those who have also seen composite nighttime satellite photos of Earth recognize how effective humans have become at dispelling the dark. Thickly populated, industrialized regions of the globe appear so starkly illuminated in these images that it's easy, for example, to discern the intricate outlines of the Great Lakes. Italian astronomer Pierantonio Cinzano has compiled the first world atlas of night sky brightness with satellite data and models of light propagation. It reveals that one-tenth of the world population, approximately 40 percent of the U.S. population, and one-sixth of the European Union population live where nighttime brightness is too intense for the human eye to use night vision.

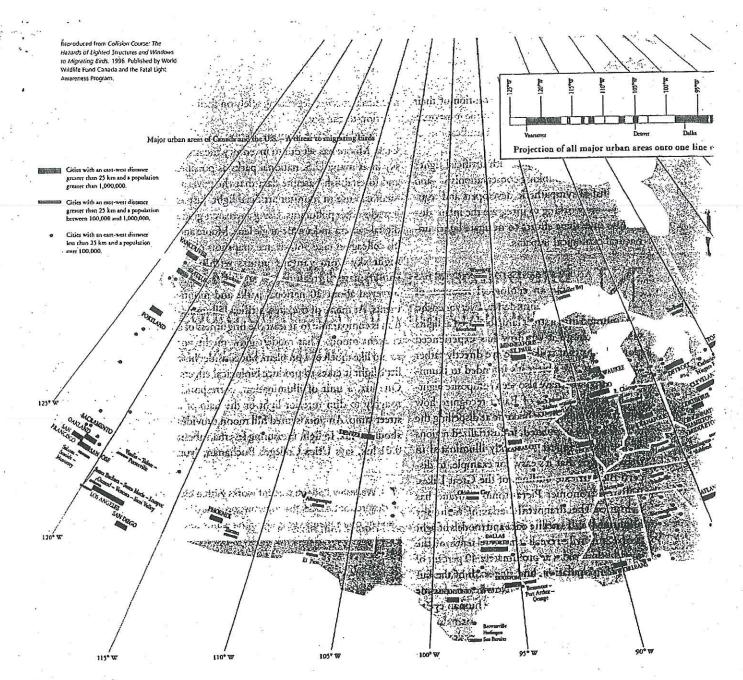
Not all light that goes up comes down, but a considerable amount of it does. Reflected off moisture and dust in the atmosphere, it creates a nighttime twilight known as sky glow. "I've been amazed at how far light will travel," says Chad Moore, a physical scientist with the National Park Service. Major cities can broadcast sky glow as far as 250 to 300 kilometers, perpetually illuminating a sector of the sky every-. where within that radius. "We've discovered a pollutant," Moore says, "and we've saturated our environment with it." When distant glow falls almost horizontally on hilly terrain, slopes that face the city can be bathed in light, whereas lessexposed hillsides retain nearly natural levels of darkness. That effectively fragments the habitat into areas that are more or less suitable for

nocturnal species, depending solely on their orientation to the sky.

Based at Bryce Canyon National Park in Utah, Moore has set out to inventory the night sky in as many U.S. national parks as possible and to establish baseline data that the government can use to monitor artificial light, just as it tracks other pollutants. Using a research-grade digital camera and a wide-angle lens, Moore and his colleagues take 360-degree snapshots of the night sky from vantage points within the nation's natural treasures. So far, his team has surveyed about 20 national parks and monuments. At many of the sites, artificial illumination is comparable to at least the brightness of a crescent moon. That modest glow might not sound like much of a problem, but consider how little light it takes to produce biological effects. One lux, a unit of illumination, corresponds roughly to dim interior light or the halo of a street lamp. An unobscured full moon provides about 0.3 lux. In light measuring less than about 0.01 lux, says Utica College's Buchanan, "you

▼ A Wellesley College student works with a black plastic enclosure that blocks the transmission of artificial light at night. The enclosure hangs vertically in the water column.

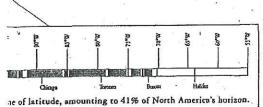


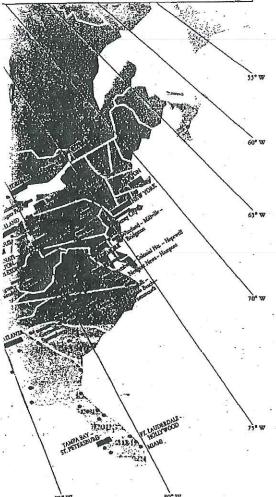


If the east-west width of each North American city with a population >100,000 is projected onto one line (a "horizon" from a bird's-eye view), then the aggregate width of these urban areas is equivalent to 41 percent of the total east-west width of North America.

can see objects, but you would have trouble writing. You might not be able to tell the difference between an M&M and a deer pellet." Squirrel tree frogs (Hyla squirella), by contrast, can see well enough to navigate and forage at 0.0001 lux or less, and they avoid activity when illumination exceeds 0.001 lux. Other frog species favor even darker conditions.

It's tempting to assume that artificial light distresses only a few exquisitely sensitive species. But mounting evidence suggests that the disappearance of darkness can affect plants and animals in a variety of ecosystems. Snake populations are declining in the vicinity of developing parts of California, for example. And intriguingly, it seems that not all the blame lies with familiar culprits like new roads and neighborhoods. Nocturnal snake species are thinning out more rapidly than diurnal snake species, even in areas where development isn't cutting directly into snake habitat. "There are certain areas in southern California," says biologist Robert Fisher of the U.S. Geological Survey, "that have what seems like suitable habitat for these nocturnal snakes. But they're not there, even though their diurnal counterparts are."





started down the long road toward understanding light pollution's ecosystem-scale ramifications. Late on a summer's night, you might spot Marianne Moore (no relation to Chad of the National Park Service) adrift in a rowboat on Boston's Jamaica Pond. Hours after the sun's last rays have faded, the Wellesley College limnologist and two of her colleagues put in and row out to the pond's middle. While one researcher holds a light sensor aloft, another toils beneath a black shroud to keep the glow of a laptop screen from foul-

ing their dara collection.

"Somebody told us we look like we're transporting illegal aliens," chuckles Moore. She and her team have occasionally had to placate suspicious police officers or explain themselves to locals who jog on the lighted paths ringing the shore. In truth, the cruises are part of their study of how much nocturnal light penetrates the water's surface at several lakes in New England.

Moore suspects that artificial illumination alters aquatic ecosystems from the smallest organisms on up. The implications are far reaching and could ultimately link light pollution to water quality. Minute zooplankton lurk well below the surface during the day to avoid predators, then rise to graze on algae at night. But artificial light discourages them from venturing toward the surface. "If their grazing is inhibited . . . effects will cascade up the food chain," Moore says. Algae populations could explode in response to reduced predation, and those blooms would deplete dissolved oxygen critical to fish, crowd out other photosynthesizers, and cast unwanted daytime shade on submerged aquatic vegetation that provides habitat for juvenile fish.

When Moore and her colleagues experimentally blocked light from filtering into the depths, they found that some small taxa of 200plankton ascended two to three meters more than the organisms did under typical unnaturally bright conditions. Moore expects even stronger effects among larger kinds of zooplankton, some of which are known to avoid levels of illumination comparable to bright starlight. The intensity of artificial light shining on Jamaica Pond is considerably brighter than starlight, she has found, even on cloudless nights. When clouds roll in and reflect Boston's glow downward onto the pond, light intensity can triple to almost two-thirds the luminosity of the full moon.

Moore has an idea for testing whether light pollution has steered evolution in Jamaica Pond during the century that it has been bathed in artificial light at night. Certain zooplankton lay eggs that settle to the bottom and can remain viable in a suspended state for decades, creating an "egg bank" that stores in the sediments the genetic traits of successive generations. Moore envisions digging up eggs, determining when

Artificial light may sculpt not only the lives of individual organisms but also the biological evolution of their species.

they were laid based on the age of adjacent sediment, hatching them, and then exposing the organisms to light to see whether their responses vary according to their age.

"Invertebrates evolve very quickly, so it's very reasonable to expect that they've responded to a history of artificial light," Moore says. By contrast, longer-lived organisms such as fish probably need more time to adapt. That inequality could add to stress on fish populations, she says.

F THE SCIENCE RELATING TO LIGHT pollution's ecological impacts remains in its infancy, regulation to minimize its effects in sensitive areas has barely been conceived, says Sara Wan of the California Coastal Commission.

Nevertheless, perceived ecological threats from light pollution have helped stop a smattering of incautious development initiatives. In 1999 the commission rejected an application to add dazzling ornamental floodlighting on the Vincent Thomas Bridge in Los Angeles after hearing ecologists' objections. One of the gravest concerns was that powerful beams of light would disorient and fatally attract migratory birds, says Catherine Rich, a cofounder of The Urban Wildlands Group who presented to the commission scientific data against the project. The data did not make an absolutely airtight case, but they raised substantial cause for concern, says Wan, who holds advanced degrees in both biology and electrical engineering. Developers subsequently modified the proposed lighting design to reduce the light emissions. The final plan is ecologically so much more sound than the original proposal, Rich says, that her conservation think tank endorses it.

In Bangor, Maine, environmental activists successfully challenged a proposal to build a Wal-Mart Supercenter. In March 2003, the state's Board of Environmental Protection ruled that development of the site, including lights shining over the parking lot, would pose unacceptable risks to neighboring wetlands. In Seattle, critics of a proposal to construct lighted sports fields at Sand Point Magnuson Park have made the impacts on wildlife and the night sky central to their opposition. Light pollution from the fields would shine onto adjacent wetlands and lakeshore.

Most regulators, however, rarely hear conservationists object to development proposals on the basis of light pollution, Wan believes. Scientists and conservationists may not feel tempted to appear at public hearings without rock-solid cases, she says, but their frequent silence means some regulators remain wholly unaware of the issue.

NANOTHER FRONT, MICHAEL MESURE of the Toronto-based nonprofit, Fatal Light Awareness Program, has been leading a campaign against light pollution in Toronto since 1996. The first time Mesure witnessed the aftermath of the phenomenon known as "tower kill," he could hardly believe his eyes. Even before he climbed out of his car, he could see in downtown Toronto's pre-dawn gloom a bird carcass on the sidewalk. Others lay nearby. The migrating animals had been lured off course by lights on high-rise office buildings and had fatally collided with the structures.

On some mornings since that day in 1988, Mesure and an army of volunteers have identi-

For More Information

Miscellaneous papers on the ecological consequences of artificial night lighting can be downloaded from www.urbanwildlands.org

Pierantonio Cinzano's maps of night sky brightness can be seen at http://dipastro.pd.astro.it/ cinzano



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fied more than 1,000 birds that had perished in this way during the previous night. The Fatal Light Awareness Program targets tenants in downrown Toronto's high-rises, and it advocates the use of window shades or blinds and directed task lighting at workstations, as well as switching off lights in unused areas at night. Over the past five years, a 17-percent reduction in the amount of light escaping from those buildings has noticeably reduced the volume of nocturnal tower kill, Mesure says.

Even where steps have been taken to mitigate light pollution, organisms face the threat of ever-bigger, ever-brighter civilization. At the loggerhead turtle nesting grounds in Florida, says turtle tesearcher Michael Salmon of Florida Atlantic University, "the problem is fast becoming not the amount of light at the beach but rather sky glow from inland." Salmon argues that the growing threat to darkness must be attacked at its source—population centers. "Nothing covers that," he says, "except having

a national policy that governs how lighting is used everywhere."

That idea might sound more farferched than it is. The Czech Republic's parliament set an international precedent in 2002 when it passed the first national law to address light pollution, which requires shielding of public lights among other measures. At least 11 U.S. states and numerous towns and counties have also enacted laws or ordinances that regulate at least some aspects of light pollution.

That sort of sky change would be welcome elsewhere. In upstare New York, Bryant Buchanan is garhering data on nocturnal illumination in one of his favorite scientific stomping grounds, Utica Marsh. Near a brightly lit roadway that cuts through the wetland, he pauses and holds up a sensor to measure light from each of the cardinal directions. Then, in the columns and rows of his field notebook, he records the data. Even without a flashlight, he has no trouble writing.

▲ Since 1993, Fatal Light Awareness Program volunteers have rescued over 25,000 birds, from 158 different species, that collided with Toronto's towers. This photo shows just a few of the birds that didn't make it. (www.flap.org)

Ben Harder covers the environment for Science News and has written in print or online for National Geographic, Science, and U.S. News & World Report.

WEDNESDAY JUNE 23, 2004

Species plan wins state, federal OKs

county: Local officials say the approval will let them move ahead on needed infrastructure.

BY JENNIFER BOWLES AND ADAM EVENTOV THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

State and federal wildlife agencies on Tuesday approved Riverside County's landmark plan to protect endangered species while allowing development to occur amid the population boom in its fast-growing western half.

"Today is a good day," said Richard Lashbrook, director of the Riverside County Transportation and Land Management Agency. "These permits really allow us to move ahead."

County Supervisor John Tavaglione said the permits will cut in half the time needed for environmental review for new roads, homes, bridges and flood-control projects.

"With all our growth," he said, "we need to have an ability

to build this infrastructure much quicker."

The plan calls for creating a 500,000-acre reserve system that would protect 146 species, from majestic bald eagles to delicate butterflies and tiny kangaroo rats. The county already has purchased about 370,000 acres and will need to buy the remaining land from willing sellers, leaving about 130,000 acres yet to be acquired.

The plan's total cost over 75 years is estimated at \$2 billion and relies heavily on future state and federal funding. The county will pay about \$1 billion, more than half of which will come developer fees, Lashbrook said.

Missing link

With wildlife reserves in place, the plan allows for species' habitats elsewhere to be destroyed to make way for development in a county where the population is expected to double to 3 million by 2025.

Permits for the county were

SPECIES: Developers still want 'no surprises' element added

CONTINUED FROM AT

signed Tuesday by the California Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The 75-year permit by the federal agency, however, doesn't include a key clause under the nation's Endangered Species Act that gives the county and developers assurances that further protections won't be needed.

A federal judge ruled the so-called "no surprises" clause was crafted illegally and ordered the wildlife agency to redo it with public input.

"If and when 'no surprises' is reauthorized or allowed, then we'd have the benefit of it under the plan," said Lashbrook, explaining the permit was worded in a way to allow that

in a way to allow that.

Developers, who will have to pay \$1,650 per residential unit to help pay for the reserve management, said they were frustrated that the clause was not included. Environmentalists challenged the clause, saying it does little for species if they need further protection or if a new species is listed.

"Our only course was to go forward, accept the plan and then work feverishly to bring back the 'no surprises' assurances," said Borre Winkel, executive director of the Riverside County chapter of the Building Industry Association.

He said he's concerned that new species would be listed and new protections required as new projects are built.

"We're trying to balance the property owners' rights while protecting habitat."

Stephen Mandoki, city manager of Murrieta

Lashbrook said he doesn't think that will happen in the near future, but problems could occur down the road.

"All of us think 'no surprise' is really important to the long-term ylability of the plan," he said.

Species diversity

The county's growth plan has been heralded as one of the nation's most ambitious because it looks at not only species protection, but also new homes and roads should be built.

"The (wildlife) component is one part of the most ambitious planning processes being undertaken in Southern California," said Jane Hendron, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The plan covers 24 plants and animals protected under the U.S. Endangered Species Act,

and 122 additional species that are in danger of becoming listed if they're not protected, Hendron said.

She said the Inland region has so many endangered and threatened species because of the diversity of elevation and habitat, from sage scrub to meadows to rivers and mountains.

"It runs the gamut of habitat types and supports an incredible diversity of species," she said.

City reaction

While the bulk of the protected habitat land is in unincorporated areas of Riverside County, most of the cities in western Riverside County have some acreage that is covered under the plan as future habitat or developable land.

Murrieta City Manager Stephen Mandoki said the plan should help developers because a mitigation plan will already be in place for a piece of property.

Without the plan, he said, a developer would have to buy land somewhere else to compensate for the habitat that is being built on. But under the county plan, that land will already be set aside.

"We're trying to balance the property owners' rights while protecting habitat," Mandokl

If the plan prohibits development on a piece of property, he said, the county has to pay fair market value for the land at the time of the proposed development.

The plan covers roughly 5,000 acres of Lake Elsinore, and Mayor Thomas Buckley said it creates open space in the city, which could attract a more upscale home buyer.

"The city is going to grow," Buckley said, "but it won't be a wall of stucco."

Reach Jennifer Bowles at (909) 368-9548 or Jbawles@pe.com



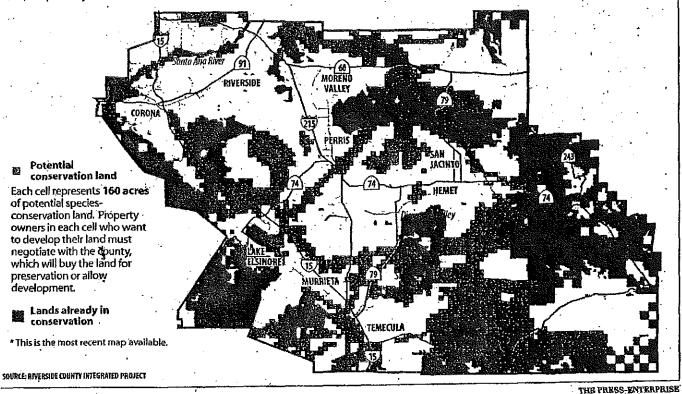


PERSPECTIVE

THE SUNDAY PRESS-ENTERPRISE Inland Southern California's Newspaper

Protecting species

Riverside County has identified 310,000 acres of private land as potential wildlife habitat to protect 146 plants and animals in its western half. The county has already acquired about 370,000 acres of publicly owned or protected land for a reserve system and is seeking 133,000 privately held acres.



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Animal Overpasses, Tunnels Offering Roadkill Remedy

Cameron Walker For National Geographic News May 12, 2004

It's one of the first rules learned in kindergarten: Hold hands and look both ways before crossing the street. But while stoplights and crosswalks can help people get safely to the other side, animals may need a bit more assistance.

Now special "ecopassages" are helping wildlife reach the other side of the road, giving them a better chance at finding food, meeting mates, and completing migrations.

Read the full story >>



A black bear explores a natuoverpass that straddles a Canada's Banff National Park in Across North America, "ecopbridges and tunnels built to hicross roads—are helping wildiautomobile collisions and to ruthat has been bisecte

Photograph copyright Tons



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Trave

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According to the Federal Highway Administration, millions of animals are killed each year on U.S. roads. Roadkill has knocked an endangered cat, the occlot, down to about 80 individuals in the U.S. The number one predator of moose in Kenai Fjords National Park, Alaska, is the car.

Along with animals, approximately 200 people each year die as a result of car-wildlife collisions.

Scientists and highway planners are now working to help get wildlife and motorists to their destinations. From salamander tunnels in Massachusetts to cougar corridors in

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Pulse of the Planet

southern California, the ecopassages that run under and above roads are allowing animals to cross roads and highways safely.

"These ecopassages can be extremely useful, so that wildlife can avoid human conflicts," said Jodi Hilty of the U.S.-besed Wildlife Conservation Society. Animals that migrate can also use make use of these passages when busy roads interrupt the animals' routes, she said. Hilty has studied ecopassages in California's oak woodlands.

Perils of Isolation

For large animals with extensive home ranges, such as mountain lions, these wildlife corridors are essential to keeping the animals' territory large and their gene pools flowing.

"If a mountain lion population in even the largest of southern California's mountain ranges is isolated, it's a matter of a few decades before they disappear," said Paul Beier, a conservation ecologist at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff.

Beier, who has studied southern California's mountain lions since 1988, has tracked the big cats with radio collars to see what their travels are like.

One of the lions he was watching, called M6, was exploring the south side of the Riverside Freeway east of Anaheim. Then, Beier found it on the other side of the freeway and found the mountain lion's tracks in both sides of the Coal Canyon tunnel under the freeway. "It was one of the most exciting days in my field research," Beier said.

As a result, the underpass has been decommissioned and restored to a more natural state, so that mountain lions and other animals can use it to get across the eight-lane highway. More recently, U.S. Geological Survey researchers have documented bobcats and coyotes using underpasses in the Riverside, California, area.

Now Beier and the South Coast Wildlands Project, an Idyllwild, California-based organization focused on keeping wilderness areas connected, have proposed 15 linkages of currently existing habitat in crowded southern California. The group is currently working on gaining protection for the lands and developing corridors that suit species from big cats to tiny voles.

Similar passages in Florida have been put in for the endangered panther. Along Alligator Alley—a stretch of interstate between Naples and Fort Lauderdale—36 tunnels have been installed. Also, a chain-link fence helps prevent animals from dashing across the highway.

Salamander Crossings

Big animals aren't the only ones in need of highway safety. One of the first ecopassage systems in the United States was a pair of amphibian tunnels created in Massachusetts in 1987.

These narrow tunnels allowed the endangered spotted salamanders to move to wetland breeding sites from upland habitat. Their route had been cut off by a two-lane road.

Other unique passages allow humans and wildlife to cross major freeways. In Florida's Marion County, Interstate 75 cuts right through a state-long swath of greenway that's habitat for bobcats, opossums, and armadillos. The area is also a prime recreation area for equestrians and hikers.

In 2000 the state built a 53-foot-wide (16-meter-wide) overpass bridging the six-lane highway. Lined with native oaks, pines, and saw palmettos, the overpass looks like an extension of the natural landscape.

A trail runs down the middle of the land bridge, so that people can use the crossing during the day. Wildlife generally take their turns at night.

Planners wanted to make both people and wildlife feel as if they were still in the greenway, Mariano Berrios said. Berrios was the project manager for the overpass for the Florida Department of Transportation.

Recently, Berrios received a surprise package in the mail: a photo of a bobcat taken by the overpass remote-sensing cameras.

'It's very good news, because we know they're finding the crossing," he said.

Canadian Corridors

One of the most extensive—and successful—ecopassage programs in North America may be in Canada's Banff National Park.

The Trans-Canada Highway, which may carry 25,000-plus vehicles each day during the busy summer, runs east and west through the national park's 2,564 square miles (6,640 square kilometers).

In the early 1980s there were about a hundred collisions between elk and vehicles each year, said Tony Clevenger, a wildlife biologist at Montana State University's Western Transportation Institute.

"It's the only national park in North America that has a major freeway running through it," he said. "Imagine the San Diego Freeway running through Yosemite."

Starting in the mid-1980s Parks Canada began installing 8-foot-high (2.4-meter-high) fences on both sides of the expanded highway. They then constructed 22 underpasses and two 1.5-million-Canadian-dollar, 164-foot-wide (50-meter-wide) overpasses for wildlife.

According to the park service, these changes resulted in a 96 percent decrease in mortality for the parks ungulates, or hooved animals.

Since 1996 Clevenger has been studying the wildlife that uses these passages. Using motion-sensing cameras and track pads (special areas that capture animal footprints), Clevenger and his crew watched to see if different species use different types of crossings.

Grizzly bears, elk, moose, wolves, and deer tended to cross on the overpasses, preferring these wide open-air structures.

But animals that spend most of their time in a forest environment, like black bears and cougars, headed to the darker, more constricted tunnels running beneath the highway. "They're used to having a lot of cover," Clevenger said.

Now Clevenger's work is being used to design a new wildlife-crossing project along an additional 19-mile (30-kilometer) stretch of highway. The project is scheduled to be completed within three years.

The grizzly bear population is so low that a few adult females killed on the road could really affect the species's numbers in the future. As a result, these passages can make a big difference for wildlife, Clevenger said. But animals should be given time to adapt to crossing on man-made structures, he added.

"The first year after construction [in Banff], only a black bear and a cougar used the passages, just one time each," Clevenger said. But now animals from elk to weasel-like martens are zipping above and below the road with greater ease—a total of more than 50,000 crossings in nearly eight years of research. One of Clevenger's research assistants was even caught on camera hiding behind a mound while a grizzly lumbered across the overpass and strolled safely away from the highway.

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Wednesday, December 15, 2004

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Wednesday, December 15, 2004 Last modified Saturday, November 20, 2004 9:38 PM PST

\$1 billion in road fees may be lost in Riverside County By: DAVE DOWNEY - Staff Writer

When 14 cities and the county drew up an ambitious plan for a \$3.2 billion backbone of regional roads meant to relieve mounting pressure on western Riverside County's freeways, they devised a developer fee to foot \$2.5 billion of the projected cost.

However, the so-called Transportation Uniform Mitigation Fee is on track to raise just 60 percent of that amount, or \$1.5 billion, according to a 148-page study delivered this month to the Western Riverside Council of Governments, which holds TUMF pursestrings.

That's partly because the Council of Governments' executive committee decided to gradually ratchet up fees for new offices, stores and manufacturing plants. But it is mostly because member agencies have waived, or plan to waive, TUMF fees for dozens of housing tracts in exchange for developers' promise to build roads.

The study, conducted by Newport Beach consulting firms David Taussig & Associates and The Concord Group, estimated that over the next two decades, as many as one-third of homebuilders will put in roads rather than pay the residential TUMF fee of \$6,650 per house, siphoning \$809 million from the program. The fee is paid at the time a building permit is taken out to clear way for construction.

Some area officials say there is no need to fret over the lost cash. They say developers are simply electing to build key transportation arteries that the cities and county would have to build eventually.

But other officials say they are gravely concerned because, in a number of cases, developers are pouring money into concrete that is not part of the regional road system which was designed to benefit every community in the western county. And they say the trend is particularly disturbing when set against the backdrop of an explosive growth spurt that is turning once-free-flowing freeways into miles-long parking lots.

"I think there's a major problem here," said county Supervisor Bob Buster, whose district straddles the Interstate 15 corridor. "What we've lost is the ability to improve the right roads at the right time."

Waiving fees

TUMF is one of two key local funding sources for transportation projects. The other is Measure A, a half-percent sales tax voters initially approved in 1988 and extended in November 2002. The programs have distinct purposes: TUMF is meant to build a grid of cross-county roads and Measure A is targeted at freeways.

Among Southwest County roads targeted for significant widening under TUMF are Scott, Newport, Winchester, Clinton Keith and Railroad Canyon.

According to the report, fees are being waived all over the western county, with some communities appearing to be more generous to developers than others. Some examples:

- Lake Elsinore is on track to exempt from TUMF nearly half, or 6,881, of 15,348 single-family homes either under construction or in the planning stages, as well as 927 of 1,322 apartments and condos.
- Murrieta is on pace to waive fees for 7,275 of 11,175 single-family homes under construction or planned.
- Temecula is expected to waive fees for virtually all of 2,575 single-family homes under construction or planned, as well as for 300 of 500 apartments.
- The county is expected to collect TUMF fees from all 32,167 single-family homes planned or under construction in the Menifee-Sun City area.

In other areas, Moreno Valley is not giving any breaks for the thousands of single-family homes and apartments being built in its city, according to the report, while Calimesa is waiving fees for 95 percent of homes going up there and Beaumont is canceling TUMF for 70 percent.

The city of Riverside reportedly has agreed to waive fees for just 10 of more than 2,000 single-family homes on the drawing board and for none of 783 planned condos and apartments.

Some waivers are as a result of developers wanting to build rather than pay. Others are a result of cities striking deals with developers before the July 2003 debut of TUMF. In still other cases, builders rushed in to obtain building permits before the fee was put in place.

Murrieta Councilman Kelly Seyarto said it is frustrating that so many houses are coming into his city without fee money, but it is largely because developer approvals and building permits pre-dated the program.

"There's really nothing you can do but watch and wish that someone would have thought of doing a TUMF fee program 15 years ago," said Seyarto, who represents that city on the Council of Governments.

Trouble down the road

But there is no question that waivers hurt the road system, he said.

"Every bit that somehow finds its way out of the TUMF program just makes it harder for us to build the road system that we all need," Seyarto said. "The bottom line is, the TUMF program is only as good as we are able to enforce it. If people are going to look for loopholes and ways to skirt the process, then we are going to have trouble down the road funding these projects."

Supervisor John Tavaglione said waivers are a major concern because "we know we have a finite amount of dollars to build these critical projects."

But Temecula Councilman Ron Roberts suggested TUMF is not in as dire shape as the report might suggest. He said in many cases developers are, in lieu of paying fees, constructing critical roads that are indeed part of the regional road system that the council of governments is working to build.

Roberts said that is the case in Temecula where the builder of Harveston, for example, is pumping millions into improving overtaxed Winchester Road.

"It balances out," Roberts said.

And Ruthanne Taylor Berger, deputy executive director of the Council of Governments, said the regional agency had always intended to mix TUMF dollars with federal and state grants to build the backbone of cross-county roads.

"Is there a gap? Yes," Taylor Berger said. "But it was never the intent that TUMF was going to be the end-all for building this network."

State funding is trickling in these days, in the wake of Sacramento's continuing fiscal crisis, and federal funding is on hold because of Congress' failure, to date, to reauthorize a national transportation program. But Taylor Berger said she is hopeful that federal and state dollars will flow again and that there will be plenty of cash to build all the roads.

Exceeding expectations

Taylor Berger said the cash flow from TUMF, to date, has actually exceeded early projections and reached \$93 million in September, she said.

"We are in good shape," she said. "We're on track, if not better than that, because of the explosive growth in certain segments of the county."

Against the backdrop of housing waivers, the city of Riverside lobbied the council of governments' governing board this month to give yet another break — to developers of office buildings.

Suggesting that office construction is critical if western Riverside County wants to become a strong job base and that the area is at a competitive disadvantage with neighboring San Bernardino County because of TUMF, Mayor Ron Loveridge asked the panel to put scheduled increases on hold.

Office fees are only assessed at one-third of the ultimate amount prescribed for the program. The fee is scheduled to reach the full amount by July 2006, after ratcheting up next summer.

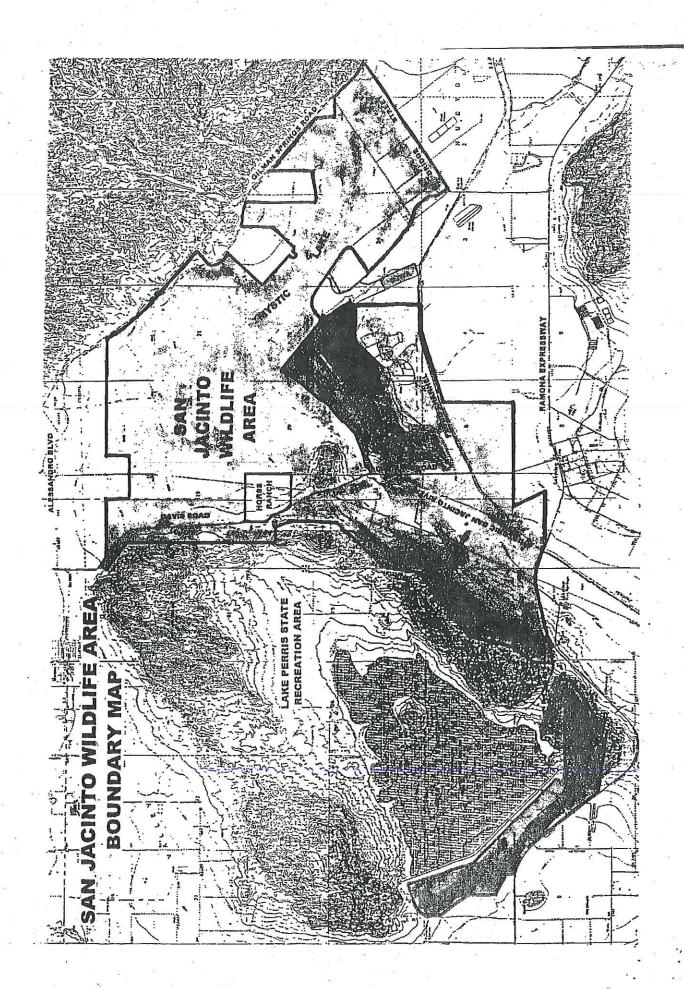
On Thursday, a Council of Governments committee recommended hiring San Bernardino economist John Husing, at a cost of \$32,000, to evaluate the potential impact of those scheduled TUMF office fee increases on western Riverside County's competitive position in the Southern California office market.

But Seyarto said scheduled increases are not likely to keep office jobs from moving to Riverside County. He said other factors, such as location to markets and access to highways, are far more important.

Lake Elsinore Mayor Thomas Buckley recalled that homebuilders sounded similar alarms before the program started.

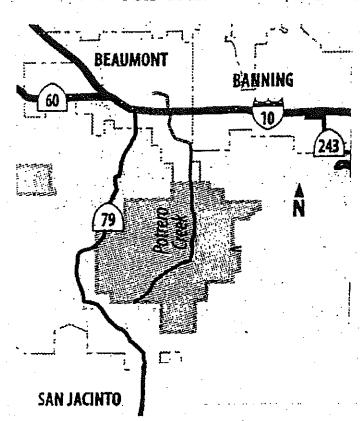
"The worst of the fears about TUMF have not come true," Buckley said. "Construction, at all levels, has continued at a rapid pace. People are still building. People are still buying. People are still selling."

Contact staff writer Dave Downey at (951) 676-4315, Ext. 2616, or ddowney@californian.com.



San Jacinto <u>Wildlife Area</u>

Potrero Creek Conservation Unit



Sept. 28, 2000

Jeff Specter, Associate Planner Community and Economic Development Department City of Moreno Valley P.O. Box 88005 Moreno Valley, CA 92552-0805

Re: Comments on draft Moreno Valley General Plan

Dear Mr. Specter:

I have been a resident of the city of Moreno Valley since 1985, and a Geologist at UCR since 1984. I would like to identify several technical issues to be included for analysis in the draft Moreno Valley General Plan (as recently outlined at public scoping sessions held in Moreno Valley). My comments comprise seven pages, including a list of published technical literature cited at the end.

The General Plan needs to consider the impacts of Moreno Valley's unique geological features on future development, especially with regard to insuring public safety and health as well as the City's long-term economic well-being. The major geological features in and near the City are:

- 1) The San Jacinto fault zone, an Alquist-Priolo fault hazard zone, is the most active earthquake fault zone in all of California. This fault zone lies at the eastern edge of the City, where potential development pressure is the greatest.
- 2) The San Jacinto Valley, the most rapidly-subsiding sediment-filled basin in California, contains the ephemeral Mystic Lake and is also located at the eastern edge of the City.

General Plan analysis of the impacts of these features on future development must go <u>beyond</u> a simple compilation of the standard state Alquist-Priolo zone maps for seismic hazards, many of which are more than a decade out of date. The analysis also must go beyond simple consideration of FEMA flood zone maps, some of which are also out of date.

These standard hazard maps are out of date because they do not include information from several important new studies of seismic and flood hazards in San Jacinto Valley and Reche Canyon, all published in the scientific literature within the past decade.

Public health and safety, especially with regard to the planned construction of schools, hospitals and residential units, cannot be achieved (mitigated to a reasonable level) by a hazard map that is incomplete, inaccurate and seriously out of date. Scientific advances in our knowledge of seismic and other geotechnical hazards occur quickly, and the information in the general plan must be kept up to date with such advances.

In fact, the state's Alquist-Priolo guidelines and legislation require that general and specific plans by lead agencies include analysis based not only on the existing state hazard map zones, but also on all other relevant published information on faults and hazards inside and outside of those map zones (Hart, 1992). This is because many recent deadly and costly seismic events have occurred on faults that were recognized but not yet officially zoned on hazard maps by the state, or were

not recognized to be active. The recent Landers, Northridge, Hector Mine and Napa Valley earthquakes are good examples.

Geotechnical Hazards

In particular, there are several specific geotechnical hazards that must be addressed by the City's draft hazard map and general plan:

- 1) seismic shaking zones and building codes
- 2) the Casa Loma fault
- 3) the Farm Road fault
- 4) a slowly-moving landslide along Gilman Springs Road
- 5) chronic subsidence and liquefaction in San Jacinto Valley
- 6) the growing size of Mystic Lake

1) Seismic Shaking Zones

San Jacinto Valley and Reche Canyon lie within at least Riverside County Seismic Hazard Zone IV(B), due to their proximity to the active San Jacinto and San Andreas fault zones. Hazard maps and analysis should depict these shaking zones and their implications for the adherence of development to the Uniform Building Code.

Within this type of hazard zone, the types of land use that may be proposed (including Critical Land Uses (e.g., hospitals), Essential Land Uses (e.g., schools) and Normal to High Risk Land uses (e.g., large apartments)) will potentially encounter levels of ground shaking that exceed the Uniform Building Code by factors of 2 to more than 5.

Such a level of shaking cannot be mitigated to a level of insignificance by any technical means known to humans. Moreover, there is a significant hazard from <u>vertical</u> ground acceleration that is not compensated for by current building codes, and also a large potential for amplification of such energy from even moderate earthquakes within valleys (such as San Jacinto) with thick sediment fill (Mueller, 1994; Seismic Safety Commission, 1995; USGS, 1996). Analysis of these hazards from recent earthquake events needs to be made in light of their constraints on planning within these types of seismic shaking zones.

2) Casa Loma fault

The Casa Loma fault strand of the San Jacinto fault zone has been depicted on previous Riverside County seismic hazard zone maps. It runs up the west side of San Jacinto Valley, almost to Highway 60.

The eastern Claremont strand of the San Jacinto fault zone and the companion parallel western Casa Loma strand are important, especially given that the Farm Road fault runs between them, thereby easing the potential propagation of ground rupture across the entire San Jacinto Valley (Park et al., 1995). This allows for a much larger earthquake event along this part of the San Jacinto fault zone.

Geologic consulting reports filed with both the County and the City of Moreno Valley for the recent gas pipeline project (Southern California Gas Pipeline No. 6900) and the Moreno Highlands Specific Plan must be analyzed for their information on the extent of this and related faults.

3) Farm Road fault

The Farm Road fault was recently discovered in the San Jacinto Valley by Park et al. (1995). Because this active fault runs medial to the major bounding faults of the San Jacinto fault zone, and because this fault runs under a major southwest U.S. natural gas transmission and compression plant located in that valley, analyses of its potential impact on ground rupture propagation and corresponding implications for public health and safety (such as gas line rupture and ignition) must be made.

4) Landslides on Gilman Springs Road

Morton and Sadler (1989) have documented the existence of an active, slowly-moving landslide along Gilman Springs Road in the San Jacinto Valley. This landslide is not shown on the draft seismic hazard maps.

Damage from this creeping landslide forces the frequent repair of this road by the County, and will continue to impact any plans for infrastructure (buildings, roadways, pipelines) along the west side of this valley. Its existence is a reflection of the chronic tectonic subsidence problem that plagues this valley (see next section).

In addition, Morton and Sadler (1989) document the existence of several older and possibly active landslides along Gilman Springs Road.

5) Subsidence and Liquefaction in San Jacinto Valley

The San Jacinto Valley is among the most seismically active of the major strike-slip fault zone valleys in southern California and has a strain rate of 20 mm per year, comparable to the San Andreas fault zone (WGCEP, 1988; Morton and Matti, 1993; Park et al., 1995).

The overproduction of groundwater from the valley's sediment fill causes the sediment aquifer layer to collapse and the valley floor to sink at a rate much faster than the normal tectonic subsidence. Morton (1977, 1992) has reviewed the data on the effects of groundwater withdrawal this century on the valley's overall subsidence, noting that the total land subsidence rate is an astounding 1-2 inches per year. Perhaps the most tangible example of the seriousness of this problem was the abandonment of an MWD dam in the valley in the 1960s, after it sank 2-3 feet (Morton, 1977).

In addition, numerous ground cracks and fissures up to a mile long, 5 feet wide and 80 feet deep have developed in the valley since the 1950s and have grown in length and number. Morton (2000) has just recently published a new geologic map of the ground fissure distribution.

These long-term geologic features are endemic to the valley and therefore cannot be mitigated to a level of insignificance by humans. They will place severe public safety constraints on any infrastructure (buildings, roadways, pipelines, dams) that may be planned for the valley.

6) Growing size of Mystic Lake

The extremely rapid rate of geologic deformation in the San Jacinto Valley has resulted in formation of a strike-slip "pull-apart basin" that has developed along parallel fault strands in the San Jacinto fault zone. Such basins or "holes" in the crystalline basement rock commonly become larger and deeper, developing into topographically low valleys along strike-slip fault

zones that are rapidly filled in with sediment and water. Local examples include the Salton Sea (along the San Andreas fault zone) and Lake Elsinore (along the Elsinore fault zone). Mystic Lake is a similar example, forming at the "low spot" in the San Jacinto Valley because of this natural tectonic subsidence along the northern San Jacinto fault zone.

Normally the uninterrupted supply of stream and river sediment into such sinking valleys would nearly keep up with the rate of tectonic subsidence, so that even though the valley's underlying crystalline basement subsides, the growing thickness of infilling sediment acts to compensate for it. Over time, the valley surface would therefore remain at a low but relatively constant elevation. In the case of the San Jacinto Valley, however, two discretionary human activities are preventing this natural geologic compensation from taking place.

The first activity is groundwater withdrawal, as mentioned in the previous section above. The second activity is the non-regulated upstream diversion of the San Jacinto River from its natural historic course into Mystic Lake (and out through the San Jacinto Wildlife Area). This diversion has cut off the main natural compensating supply of sediment into the subsiding basin and has increased the total land subsidence rate to a level well above that due to tectonic deformation and groundwater withdrawal.

In other words, the northern San Jacinto Valley already has a natural tendency to subside tectonically because of the geologic setting, but groundwater withdrawal and river diversion have exaggerated this tendency, leading quite expectedly to increased flooding problems. A major growing sinkhole is being created by the combination of tectonic deformation and human activities.

Because of these two human activities, Mystic Lake has become deeper and larger in area each time it has formed this century (Doug Morton, U.S.G.S., personal communication), and will continue to enlarge within the valley as long as the activities continue.

The only options to reverse this trend are to stop the diversion of the river and stop the excessive groundwater withdrawal, thus allowing the natural compensation for tectonic subsidence to take place. Planning for this part of the valley must take into consideration these issues and the chronic flooding problems that will occur there.

California's existing emergency response plan for a major earthquake

In 1993, the State of California made a major effort to plan for a major earthquake on the San Jacinto Fault zone (Toppozada et al., 1993). This massive study considered the impact of geology, soil, and human infrastructure on the resulting damage estimates and identifies specific areas of high risk, including areas subject to liquefaction in Riverside County. Impacts on transportation corridors and emergency response networks were also identified.

This major hazard analysis includes large areas covered by the draft Moreno Valley general plan and its data and conclusions must be integrated with the draft general plan. Schools, hospitals, high-density housing, major transportation corridors, and economically significant commercial development projects should not be slated for the areas depicted as high risk by this important State study.

This impact is made even more relevant by the important recent nationwide study by FEMA (2000), which identified the Riverside area as having the second highest potential for monetary damage from earthquakes in all of the United States. This safety and economic risk to Riverside

exists because of the proximity of that City's costly development and infrastructure to major faults and sediments that are subject to shaking. The City of Moreno Valley could find itself in a similar position of risk as its development proceeds.

Geological Impacts on Economic Development

The impacts of geological features on the economic development and well-being of the City must be assessed by the general plan. The City cannot afford to allow overly ambitious development plans, and the assumed or promised tax revenues from those projects, to run into serious completion problems because of presently foreseeable geotechnical issues.

The most recent example of this type of planning problem (and consequent unrealized tax revenue) was the Moreno Highlands Specific Plan. The developer for this project suddenly pulled out, one week after receiving their first soil and geologic trenching reports from their consultants. These trenches apparently identified serious geotechnical problems that would be associated with building out the project, such as active faulting and liquefaction. The amount and cost of geological engineering (e.g., major earthmoving and set-backs) that would be required to address these problems may have been a major impetus for their sudden withdrawal from the project. Both the developer and City were warned about these issues, but chose to ignore their significance. Any future development of the specific plan area will likely encounter similar problems.

Fault Hazards are Not The Same Everywhere

It is very common for non-geotechnical persons to assume that southern California is rife with active faults, and that earthquake and liquefaction hazards therefore must exist equally everywhere in the region. "Why should we be worried about earthquake hazards when they are everywhere in southern California?" I have often been asked. Nothing could be farther from the truth!

Such an easy, false philosophy about the pervasiveness of geotechnical hazards is dangerous. Time and again, in places like Loma Prieta, Mexico City, Landers, Northridge and Napa, we have seen that the combination of localized fault zones (with high shaking potential) and unstable (collapsible) soils and sediments can create death and costly damage during earthquakes (Seismic Safety Commission, 1995; USGS, 1996).

Specific localized zones of high risk \underline{do} exist near major fault zones, and they can be mapped out when sufficient resources are applied to the issue. This is why Alquist-Priolo legislation exists in the first place, explicitly recognizing the importance of local geology and the mapping out of such hazards.

Moreno Valley is indeed unfortunate to exist virtually on top of a major earthquake fault zone and a major sediment-filled valley filled with very unstable soils and sediments. The economic future of the City will partly depend on wise and prudent recognition of this fact, and will benefit from smart planning for the consequences.

Thank you for considering my comments on the draft hazard map for the Moreno Valley General Plan. I ask that these comments be incorporated into the public record for review of this general plan, and hereby incorporate all references cited above and below (and their contained references) into the review process for this general plan. I also ask that I be kept informed in writing of all notices, meetings and actions regarding this general plan.

Sincerely,

Mal A. Philadele

Michael A. McKibben, Ph.D. 23296 Sonnet Drive Moreno Valley, CA 92557 (909) 924-8150 prochom@mindspring.com manckiloben@aduphia.net

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November 29, 2004

Ms. Cathy Bechtel
Riverside County Transportation Commission
P.O. Box 12008
Riverside CA 92502-2208

RE: NOP for Draft EIS/EIR, Mid County Parkway

Dear Cathy,

Thank you for Mr. Haley's letter to Chairman Maurice Lyons of the Morongo Band of Mission Indians concerning the NOP for the Mid County Parkway.

The information contained with the letter indicated cultural resources would be studied and addressed in the Draft EIS/EIR. With that understanding, the Tribe is in support of the NOP proceeding. Please be sure the Tribe is consulted further as the project progresses (e.g. if/when Native American sites are found).

Please direct all further correspondence regarding this project to:

Mr. Britt W. Wilson
Cultural Resources Coordinator
Morongo Band of Mission Indians
245 N. Murray Street, Ste C
Banning, CA 92220
(951) 755-5206 direct line
Britt_wilson@morongo.org

Thank you for notifying the Tribe of your actions. The Tribe recognizes the need for improved traffic flow in the Inland Empire and it looks forward to working with you on this important project.

Sincerely,

Britt W. Wilson

Morongo Band of Mission Indians

Planning & Economic Development Department

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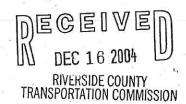
RIVERSIDE COUNTY
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society P.O. Box 10973 San Bernardino, CA 92423

December 13, 2004

Ms. Cathy Bechtel Riverside County Transportation Commission 4080 Lemon Street, 3rd floor P.O. Box 12008 Riverside, CA 92502-2208



Dear Ms. Bechtel,

Thank you for notifying the San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society (SBVAS) about the Mid County Parkway NOP. Our group has been active in conservation and planning issues in western Riverside County for many years, including a long involvement with the planning area encompassed by the proposed Parkway. We look forward to making detailed comments to the upcoming draft EIR/EIS, and hope our knowledge of the biology and land use history of the area will be incorporated into the planning decisions regarding this project.

With regards to Biological Resources, we agree with the NOP that there will be significant impacts to plant life, wildlife and wildlife habitat. We are encouraged to read that field and literature surveys of sensitive plants and animals will be conducted, as well as focused surveys for Threatened and Endangered Species. Too often, only the T&E species are given weight in planning, while the many sensitive species are given short shrift. Riverside County, in it's ambitious Integrated Project, recognizes that today's sensitive species can easily become tomorrow's endangered species due to the unparalleled rate of habitat destruction in our region. We support the proactive approach of acknowledging the legal weight carried by sensitive species, an approach consistent with the goals of the Western Riverside County MSHCP and of CEQA and NEPA.

We will be looking particularly closely at the Stephens Kangaroo Rat HCP and the Lake Matthews MSHCP, two plans that SBVAS has been involved with in a legal capacity. We expect that the Mid County Parkway will not be consistent with the goals of these two HCPs, given the potential routes offered as the various alternatives. The Lake Mathews Preserve would suffer all the impacts listed in the first paragraph of the Biological Resources section of the NOP, namely, direct loss of habitat, direct loss of plants and animals, disruption of wildlife corridors, and habitat fragmentation. There are other lands dedicated to conservation that could be affected by the proposed Mid County Parkway. The San Jacinto Wildlife Area, lands dedicated to the Western Riverside County MSHCP, and the mitigation lands of the El Sobrante Landfill could all be affected, compromising the overarching goal of the MSHCP to create contiguous uninterrupted expanses of habitat.

With the Lake Matthews MSHCP, SBVAS successfully litigated on the precept that mitigation for environmental impacts must consist of preservation of habitat that otherwise could be subject to eventual development, not land already set aside as mitigation for other projects' impacts or otherwise preserved for wildlife habitat or recreation. If the Mid County Parkway is approved, we assume that lands will need to be set aside to mitigate for its impact. We encourage the RCTC to be fair about which lands are designated as mitigation, that such lands be dedicated specifically from impacts from the Parkway, that they are biologically valuable, and are commensurate with acreage ratios set forth by the USFWS and CDFG.

In addition to commenting on the thirteen categories of potential environmental impacts listed in the NOP, SBVAS will be looking for a detailed analysis of growth-inducing impacts and cumulative impacts from the Mid County Parkway. While we recognize that transportation has become a critical issue in western Riverside County, and affects many thousands of our residents, it is our position that a major corridor project will encourage growth, not just accommodate growth. We will expect the Draft EIR/EIS to give serious consideration to this issue, as well as to the extensive cumulative impacts of the project.

The analysis of project alternatives is perhaps the most important part of an EIR or EIS, in that it weighs the environmental costs that are so exhaustively studied, and chooses the one that has the least impacts and is consistent with the project's goals. We see a potential conflict with this analysis and the goals of the HCLE as described in the NOP. Specifically, the NOP states that the Tier 1 analysis and staff recommendation call for an alignment located south of Lake Mathews, yet two of the Parkway alternatives do not include a southern alignment. We must assume that because these two alternatives are included, that they will be given as detailed and fair an analysis as the other ones. We also urge that additional alternatives are generated, given the likelihood that any of the current alternatives will seriously impact the Lake Mathews HCP and other lands dedicated to conservation. Given the proposed alignments, the No Project Alternative is likely the least environmentally damaging, and should be given thorough consideration.

We commend the RCTC for clearly intending to produce a thorough and unbiased EIR/EIS, which will allow the public to analyze the potential impacts of the proposed Mid County Parkway.

Sincerely,

Nancy L Higher Nancy Highee

Conservation Committee,

San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society

Mr. Roy Wilson, Chairman Riverside County Board of Supervisors County Administrative Center 4080 Lemon Street - 5th floor Riverside CA 92501

Mr. Robert A. Buster, Supervisor First District Riverside County Board of Supervisors County Administrative Center 4080 Lemon Street - 5th floor Riverside CA 92501

Mr. John M. Mylne, III
Western Municipal Water District
Representative to Metropolitan Water District
P.O. Box 5286
450 Alessandro Blvd.
Riverside CA 92517

Mr. Tay Dam Federal Highway Administration 888 South Figueroa St. Los Angeles CA 90017

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SANTA ANA MOUNTAINS TASK FORCE AND SAN GORGONIO CHAPTER, SIERRA CLUB

December 20, 2004

Attn.: Ms. Cathy Bechtel
Director of Transportation Planning and Policy Development
Riverside County Transportation Commission
3560 University Avenue, Suite 100
Riverside, CA 92501

Tay Dam, Senior Transportation Engineer, Federal Highway Administration—Los Angeles Metro Office, 201 N. Figueroa Street, Suite 1460, Los Angeles, California 90012. Telephone: (213) 202–3954. Fax: (213) 202–3961



RE: Notice of Preparation, Notice of Intent: Riverside County Mid-County Parkway Project

Dear Ms. Bechtel and Mr. Tam

This comment letter on the Notice of preparation and Notice of Intent for the Riverside County Mid-County Parkway Project (MCP) is submitted by the Santa Ana Mountain Task Force (SAMTF) and the San Gorgonio Chapter of the Sierra Club. The San Gorgonio Chapter of the Sierra Club has been in existence for about 60 years. Chapter members have been active in and contributed to the Riverside County Integrated Plan process since its inception. Sierra Club's goals in participating in this process are: "To explore, enjoy and protect the wild places of the earth; to practice and promote the responsible use of the earth's ecosystems and resources; to educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environments."

SAMTF is a group formed by the Angeles and San Gorgonio Chapters of the Sierra Club for the express purpose of protecting the resource values of the Trabuco District of the Cleveland National Forest. SAMTF has been in existence for about 3 years and was formed because the Trabuco District is common to both Sierra Club Chapters that formed it and because there is tremendous development pressure coming from Riverside and Orange Counties which threatens the forest resource values. Task Force members are active participants in the Major Infrastructure Study (MIS) being jointly conducted by both counties.

In September, 2002 we submitted comments to the DEIR/S for the CETAP East/West transportation Corridor project.

We would like to be included as stakeholders and participants in the CEQA and NEPA process for this project. Please send all responses and future documents to:

Ulrike Luderer, Secretary Santa Ana Mountains Task Force P.O. Box 5079 Irvine, CA 92616 Terry Wold Conservation Coordinator San Gorgonio Chapter, Sierra Club 4079 Mission Inn Avenue Riverside, CA 92501

We are using the NOP published at the RCTC web page for the MCP and could not find in that document the final date for comments. If it was earlier than 12/20/2004, please accept our request for late filing.

We are committed to continuing to work constructively with all of the agencies involved to ensure an outcome that: results in a comprehensive plan, including a transportation proposal connecting Orange and Riverside Counties and which is in compliance with MSHCP and protects already identified species and habitat areas; and directs the majority of new growth and development away from sensitive resources areas and minimizes harm to the environment.

Sierra Club is on record as supporting compact development within existing cities and urban areas ("community centers concept"), and believes that more than sufficient "infill" lands exist to accommodate future growth in both Counties.

We submit this letter to insure that the anticipated DEIR/S complies with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA"), Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq., the CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations, title 14, Section 15000 et seq. ("CEQA Guidelines") and the National Environmental Policy Act ("NEPA") and the NEPA Regulations.

I. Introductory Comments

We admit to some confusion which this NOP has caused us. We are not certain if it is intended as an addition to or a replacement for the prior CETAP DEIR/S. Since that DEIR/S was not finalized we have not seen the response to our comments of September 2002. Much of what we said then can still be said and we fail to see the point of having to say it again without the benefit from knowing your view on the merit of our work. This seems to us to be a dubious and inefficient use of CEQA/NEPA?

If the MCP is a replacement for the prior CETAP project then we expect the forthcoming DEIR/S to go into detail why it is that the alternative analysis which made the Hemet to Elsinore corridor the preferred project is no longer valid after just two years and what are the particular aspects of the MCP which now makes it the preferred project. The prior preferred project must surely be a contender for the current preferred project, especially if it can be converted from a freeway to a parkway – and why not?

If the MCP is intended as an addition to the Hemet to Elsinore project then the DEIR/S should say so. If that is the case, then the DEIR/S needs to say why both projects are needed and certainly they should be considered together in final form and certification.

CETAP is one component of the RCIP, which also includes a new Riverside County General Plan and MSHCP for western Riverside County. The purpose of the RCIP is to integrate the processes of planning land uses, transportation improvements and habitat preservation for endangered species. We expect that the forthcoming DEIR/S will discuss what this new proposal will do to the General Plan and MSHCP and how all 3 will interact.

Added to the prior planning documents is the current MIS effort. This is expected to produce a document that will give a thorough presentation of transportation options from Orange to Riverside Counties. It is almost impossible to make a final plan for the MCP without integrating the MIS outcome into that plan.

II. Particular Comments

A. Baseline conditions and settings

In addition to growing population and ever increasing traffic, this project proposal is set in the RCIP, the SCAG Compass Vision, the MIS, the March Joint Powers planning for an "Inland Port", unacceptable air quality and a county, state and federal budget short on transportation funds.

This all needs thorough discussion in the DEIR/S in order to give the public the benefit of understanding how the final decision on the project was derived in this total context.

In SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA COMPASS - GROWTH VISION REPORT JUNE, 2004, SCAG has essentially said that what we have been doing in the past is not working. They emphasize that we need a new way of doing things. Quoting from Compass, "A primary theme of policy dialogue comments and ideas was better collaboration and coordination. Participants felt that SCAG and sub-regional agencies need to foster better coordination and collaboration among different levels of government, among the various agencies that affect land use, and between land use and transportation planning."

This clearly implies that any major Riverside County transportation plan must of necessity take into account transportation planning which involves Orange and San Bernardino Counties. It also implies that there must be adequate discussion of land use planning.

Compass also said that: "Experience suggests that SCAG, the sub-regions, and local jurisdictions can more easily achieve their collective goals by actively encouraging and empowering sub-regional planning and coordination within the context of a regional comprehensive plan.

While it is not possible to force this kind of cooperative planning (note that we are talking about MORE cooperation than currently exists), we can at least reasonably expect that the DEIR/S will discuss means of increased cooperation, that is if there is any will at all to comply with the Compass document.

The MIS effort is currently sorting through options for inter-county transportation based on computer evaluation of those options. This will involve traffic flow estimates and these in turn will depend on

the MCP. These two projects cannot logically be evaluated without taking each other into account and the DEIR/S must do that.

The budget situations are so desperate that Ron Roberts, Temecula councilman and SCAG president has said publicly that he thinks these projects are not affordable and probably won't be built. The No Build alternative, which focuses on improvements to existing roads, in combination with transit/TSM and land use measures that reduce reliance on the automobile must be given serious consideration in light of the situation with money. If we can't afford the MCP we can't sit back and do nothing. We need to choose a project alternative which we can afford.

In order to make appropriate judgments we need to know the status of federal, state and regional funding for roadway and transit improvements, and the prospect of future funding as compared with the costs of the proposed corridor projects. The DEIR/S should specifically identify the costs of ongoing and approved roadway improvement projects on existing roads as a basis for comparison with the projected costs of this new project. The key questions that need to be addressed include: a) can the County afford the project? b) to what extent will completing ongoing and approved roadway improvement projects on existing roads address the project objectives? c) what are the existing gaps in funding needed to complete ongoing and approved roadway improvement projects in the region (e.g. those already in approved regional and state transportation plans)?

A practice of choosing some time and some circumstance in the future as a baseline against which alternatives are evaluated is akin to setting up a self fulfilling prophecy. CEQA demands that the current situation be the baseline. It is not farfetched to postulate that future conditions will strongly depend on the choice of project alternatives and these must be evaluated in the light.

B. Segmenting the DEIR/S must be avoided

The MIS and the Riverside County to Orange County project must be included. For example if some form of rapid transit is a component of that plan then the MCP must facilitate connection to the rapid transit so as to maximize ridership. In that case the Orange County Transportation Authority must be a responsible agency.

The NOP says that the project must provide a facility that is compatible with a future multimodal transportation system and it must accommodate Surface Transportation Assistance Act (STAA) National Network for oversized trucks. This anticipates that a major use of the MCP will be to accommodate truck traffic from the Long Beach port to the "Inland port" at March air base.

A multi-modal planning effort considers highway options, and also looks at transit and other forms of travel demand management and movement of goods. Any mode on the MCP whether it be goods movement, transit or commuter traffic must have some where to go and that is clearly the future MIS facility because the 91 freeway is already "maxed out". For this reason the MIS facility must be included in the MCP DEIR/S.

A lead agency must determine the proposed action's full extent, including all components, segments, and future phases. An agency may not divide a proposed action into smaller segments to avoid disclosure and analysis of the full environmental effects.

The RCIP is one reason for the federal government giving CETAP a high priority for federal support. This means that the whole of all transportation objectives as well as the other components must really be integrated.

The RCIP process is an acknowledgement that "the interconnectedness of all of the elements is essential to the future quality of life for Riverside County residents. We support an integrated approach to these plans as originally set forth by the County when the RCIP process was begun.

C. Statement of purpose and Need

An EIS must explain the underlying purpose and need to which the agency is responding in proposing the alternatives, including the proposed action. The purpose and need/project objectives statements are relied on to determine the appropriate range of alternatives. A statement of purpose and need cannot be so narrowly defined that it eliminates reasonable alternatives.

As far as we can tell the most pressing need in Riverside County is to relieve the congestion on the 91 freeway. This is accompanied by the need to move truck traffic through and into the county, especially as this will be affected by the plans for the March Inland Port. Secondary to these pressing needs is the desire to accommodate recreation traffic associated with the Eastside Reservoir recreation complex, also involving the 91 freeway. The fact that 3 million dollars is being spent on the MIS transportation question is indicative of those needs.

We do not see why a major and necessary part of the total plan to satisfy these needs should be left out — the MIS - and why another part should be so narrowly defined that the real need is ignored in the statement of purpose — the MCP.

The DEIR/S must include statements of purpose and need that acknowledge the growing body of evidence that communities cannot build their way out of traffic congestion with the addition of new and expanded roadways. Additional land use based and transit alternatives must also be included. We don't need a new highway that we can't afford in the first place.

A few years ago the state legislative analyst made the following observations.

- The state traditionally has addressed transportation problems by increasing the capacity of the transportation system; however, this is unlikely to permanently alleviate traffic congestion.
- The California Transportation Plan recommends that the state's highest transportation priority should be demand reduction, and its lowest should be construction of new transportation facilities.

The DEIR/S must address this expert opinion and establish why it is that demand reduction shouldn't be the preferred project as it is the most likely to be cost effective.

D. Alternatives

At a minimum the alternatives analyzed must include:

- An alternative that focuses on transit rather than new roads, including expanded rail (for freight transport), Metrolink and buses.
- A No Build alternative, which focuses on improvements to existing roads, in combination with transit/TSM and land use measures that reduce reliance on the automobile.

Land use based or transit-oriented alternatives as advocated by the Compass Vision, include, 1) directing all new development into existing cities; 2) phasing requirements, which would direct new development first to existing cities and unincorporated urban areas in conjunction with needed transportation capacity improvements; 3) intensified Community Center alternative with or without Rural Emphasis elements as described in the General Plan; 4) transfer of development rights, cluster provisions and other mechanisms to direct growth and protect community separators; 5) purely transit alternatives (e.g. buses on existing routes, dedicated busways, expanded Metrolink, expanded rail); 6) improvements to existing rights-of-ways only; 7) TSM alternatives; and 8) alternatives for movement of goods, including truck dedicated roads and/or specified hours for truck usage of roads and expanded rail.

All of the alternatives analyzed must not assume that the same amount of growth will occur, with or without the project. Alternatives must include both a range of the amount of growth to be planned for and accommodated in the County unincorporated areas, and the location of that growth. Even assuming the premise that growth planned for by the General Plan update is inevitable, it is NOT inevitable that significant amounts of that growth are accommodated in County unincorporated areas. An alternative or alternatives that locate the majority of that growth in existing cities must be analyzed, along with a transportation system that would best suit this outcome (e.g. Corridor and Transit with modest improvements to existing route options).

E. Impact and Cumulative Analysis

One way to characterize the current congestion on the 91 freeway is that it is a proof that CEQA documents associated with the growth of Riverside County in past decades have consistently underestimated and failed to mitigate the cumulative traffic impacts of individual development plans. An audit would likely show that the vast majority of those documents claimed that cumulative impacts were mitigated to the level of insignificance. Were this in fact the case there would be no problem on the 91 freeway.

CEQA mandates that a legally adequate cumulative impacts analysis views a particular project over time and must consider the impacts of the project combined with other projects causing related impacts, including past, present, and probable future projects. Projects currently under environmental review unequivocably qualify as reasonably probable future projects to be considered in a cumulative impacts analysis. In addition, projects anticipated beyond the near future should be analyzed for their cumulative effect if they are reasonably foreseeable. This includes the MIS.

The cumulative impacts analysis must include a comprehensive map illustrating the relationship of the General Plan, the MSHCP reserves and all of the proposed corridors and other planned transportation projects.

The development industry includes planners, land owners, developers and builders. As in all other free enterprises in the United States, these act in a way to maximize their profits and gains. This is as it should be. Frequently this means developing in outlying and remote areas which means that they usually advocate more highway construction to facilitate home sales. While this practice may comport with free enterprise it doesn't always serve the public interest. That this has prevailed is the reason that the Inland Empire has been rated as the leader in sprawl of the major metropolitan areas in the country.

This project should be evaluated in terms of its cumulative contribution to sprawl. The alternative is more compact development in already developed areas with increased transit as advocated in the Compass Vision.

F. Species and habitat impacts.

We expect a complete treatment of the impact to sensitive areas in Riverside County and in the National Forest. Since the MCP project must include the expected MIS project in its total impact we expect that there will be impacts to the National Forest in addition to the areas already delineated in the MSHCP. These should be totally integrated into all alternative analyses and mitigation plans.

G. Air Quality Conformity

We expect a detailed discussion of the relationship of this project to the State Implementation Plan (SIP). Are we in a non-attainment area and does this have any significance with respect to conformity to the SIP?

In light of the fact that this project will almost certainly serve to accommodate increased truck traffic to the March port it is likely to be the cause of increased particulate emissions thereby raising the levels of fine particulate and other pollutants in the area.

It is our understanding that the proposed project must be found to conform to the SIP or the MPO is prohibited from engaging in, supporting, providing financial assistance for, permitting, and approving an activity.

The DEIR/S should provide information concerning the status of air quality in the region and what factors have contributed to existing conditions (e.g. industrial buildout, location of warehouses generating new trips, specific hot spots, etc.). This and other complete setting information must be provided in the DEIR/Ss. In the absence of adequate, accurate and complete setting information, adequate analyses of project-related and cumulative impacts cannot be completed.

H. Climate change and greenhouse gases.

We expect that all alternatives will be evaluated in terms of expected net life time generation of greenhouse gases. This has become an important part of the policy of the state of California and can not logically be ignored in transportation planning. We expect that this will be done on the basis of best estimates of real traffic and not on the basis of some false hypothetical baseline.

We do not really need to justify this expectation because in AB 1493 (2002) the state of California has said:

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The Legislature hereby finds and declares all of the following:

(a) Global warming is a matter of increasing concern for public health and the environment in the state.

(b) California is the fifth largest economy in the world.

(c) The control and reduction of emissions of greenhouse gases are critical to slow the effects of global warming.

A beginning to addressing this concern is an estimate of greenhouse gas generation expected from all planning but especially transportation planning. This is necessary so that the public and decision makers can evaluate the impacts of proposed projects.

The California Energy Commission has said; "Global climate change is real. There is worldwide agreement among scientists that increased greenhouse gas pollutants from human activities are causing dangerous warming of the earth's atmosphere.

Climate change matters to California. The repercussions of a change in climate are serious. They challenge the state's infrastructure investments and touch all sectors of the economy: water supply, agriculture, forestry, energy production, health, transportation, tourism and others.

Climate change is driven in large part by carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases derived from fossil fuels. While electricity production and industry are universally important sources, transportation is the source of more than half of the fossil fuel carbon dioxide in California. It is critical that the state begin to reduce the rate of growth in emissions from this sector." (CEC web page on climate change)

As a part of this concern Caltrans is tasked with their part in the process.

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is addressing climate change by reducing emissions through energy efficiency measures and use of alternative technologies to lessen the emissions from the state transportation system, vehicle fleet and reduction of time spent in cars and in traffic.

 Reduce on-road emissions through community planning, increasing transit ridership, and vehicle occupancy, minimizing travel demand and maximizing traffic efficiency (CEC web page).

Given these policy statements from the state there is no reason that alternative analysis on this project should not put the emphasis on these alternatives. Each alternative must be evaluated on the basis of greenhouse gas emissions.

I. Induced Growth

The DEIR/S must address the question raised by transportation researchers concerning growth inducing transportation projects. There is sufficient data to suggest that this is a real concern and that it needs to be included in the analysis of impacts.

A report published by Marlon G. Boarnet, Departments of Urban and Regional Planning and Economics and Institute of Transportation Studies University of California, Irvine and Andrew F. Haughwout Federal Reserve Bank of New York details the issue. This was a Discussion Paper prepared for The Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, August 2000 called DO HIGHWAYS MATTER? EVIDENCE AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF HIGHWAYS' INFLUENCE ON METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT

Overall, the authors conclude that changes in metropolitan location patterns are induced by highways, and these changes are not, on net, costless. A rational highway investment plan should account for the effects on location that highways induce.

The authors recommend an increased role for representative regional decision-making bodies with both the vision and the authority to balance the competing transportation demands of various metro area constituencies. Such bodies would ideally design policy so as to maximize the regional, rather than local, advantages that transportation policies offer.

This is exactly what SCAG has done in its Compass Vision.

According to the Surface Transportation Policy Project analysis of data released by the Texas Transportation Institute on highways and traffic: "building new and wider roads has had little long-term impact on road congestion, and that such roads appear to actually generate additional traffic."

In addition The Federal Highway Administration has recently concluded that this phenomenon of "induced traffic" does in fact occur quite frequently in metropolitan areas throughout the United States.

Induced growth can not be dismissed or easily explained away in the DEIR/S.

J. Peak Oil

Recent price escalation for oil and gasoline has given credence to the idea that we are approaching the time that oil will be in permanent short supply. It is not required that an EIR give a definitive answer to that question. However, since there are serious people who claim that oil competition will drive prices much higher over the years to come it is reasonable to ask what this possible, or even likely scenario, will do to transportation demand.

Since this project will require an expenditure of a considerable proportion of limited revenues, prudent investment of public funds demands that the investment be made with an eye to the down side. In all likelihood this project will not be in service earlier than 2012 and it should have a useful life of at least 30 years beyond that. It seems to us that there is a very good chance that gasoline will be in very tight supply by then and we would like to see a projection of demand under a variety of price scenarios. What is the long term price/demand elasticity of gasoline and how will this affect VMT?

III. Conclusion

We think that California is at a cusp with respect to the combination of Land Use and Transportation Planning. It is not clear to us that we will be able to continue with business as usual, desirable or not, and this is highlighted by the current budgetary restraints.

For a long time academic analysis from a variety of sources has been telling us that past practices are costly, ineffective and harmful. We seem to be at that point where political pressure can no longer be the determinant for decisions.

Under these circumstances a full, compete and thoughtful disclosure and analysis as contemplated by both CEQA and NEPA is urgent. The wrong decision could well turn an opportunity into a disaster. We encourage you to use maximum resources to accomplish the best investment of public funds.

Very truly yours,

Gene Frick, Co-Chair Santa Ana Mountains Task Force P.O. Box 5079

Irvine, CA 92616

DENY WHOL

Terry Wold Conservation Coordinator San Gorgonio Chapter, Sierra Club 4079 Mission Inn Avenue Riverside, CA 92501



SAN GORGONIO CHAPTER

4079 Mission Inn Avenue, Riverside, ĆA 92501 (909) 684-6203 Membership/Outings (909) 686-6112 Fax (909) 684-6172

Regional Groups Serving Riverside and San Bernardino Counties: Big Bear, Los Serranos, Mojave, Moréno Valley, Moumains, Tonquits.

20 December 2004

Ms. Cathy Bechtel Riverside County Transportation Commission 4080 Lemon Street, 3rd Floor Post Office Box 12008 Riverside, California 92502-2208

Mr. Tay Dam, Senior Transportation Engineer Federal Highway Administration – Los Angeles Metro Offica 888 South Figueroa Street, Suite 1850 Los Angeles, California 90017

Dear Ms. Bechtel and Mr. Dam:

Re: Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Mid-County Parkway Project

The Moreno Velley Group of the Sierra Club appreciates this opportunity to raise a few concerns that we hope to see addressed in the Draft EIR/EIS.

Please explain the cumulative impacts of the Mid-County Parkway Project and the San Jacinto River Flood Control Project. How will you make certain that the endangered and threatened plant community, which relies on the seasonally-flooded alkali vernal plain habitat, survives and flourishes? How will the combination of these projects impact the vernal pools that were in the area less than ten years ago? How will the combination of these projects affect the habitat for the burrowing owl, mountain plover, and western spade foot? How will the combination of these projects impact the wildlife corridors between the San Jacinto Wildlife Area/Lake Perris and the Kabian Hills?

How can you justify going through the Lake Mathews Preserve? What impacts will the project cause during and after build-out?

Since the lights from the finished project and its users will make the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat (SKR) easier prey, how will you quantify these impacts and give an analysis that the general public will understand in the Draft EIR/EIS?

Why will you not construct bridges similar to other locations over the San Jacinto River? Explain how a "no project alternative" would be environmentally superior to any of the other alternatives rather than just saying that it would be — such as the issue of ponding onto the SJWA and impacting SKR habitat.

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Which requirements of the two Clean Air Acts do you meet? Which ones does the project not meet, both immediately and twenty years after completion? What modifications could be implemented to make it possible to meet these Acts or at least come closer? How much closer?

How will the transportation control measures be enforceable, quantifiable, replicable, and accountable? What will be PM_{10} and $PM_{2,5}$ and ozone and CO_2 impacts after build-out and the induced growth twenty years later?

How are you meeting the requirement of 40 C.F.R. 93 Part A?

How does the project conform to an implementation plan approved under 42 U.S.C. Section 74107

How does the project conform to rules by the E.P.A., such as the Transportation Conformity Rule?

What are the public consultation procedures according to 23 C.F.R. Part 450?

The documents specifically describe the transportation system envisioned for the horizon years. What are the sources and dates for emission estimation?

How does the project meet the requirements of Section 93.115(b) and Section 93.115(c)?

How will you avoid conformity lapses?

The draft documents must list all regionally-significant projects and local projects when analyzing all the cumulative impacts resulting from this project, as well as those in the pipelines for future approval.

What is your base year?

How will the proposed action significantly affect the quality of the human environment?

Will the project qualify for federal legislation? If so, when?

The description of the project is not adequate. Why wasn't the entire project to Orange County included? You are segmenting the larger project.

Were each of the cities in Orange County officially notified of this NOP?

What are the direct and indirect effects of the project on the environment?

The documents must give due consideration to

- a) relevant specifics to the area
- b) resources involved
- c) physical changes
- d) alterations to ecological systems
- e) health and safety problems caused by changes
- the effects on other aspects of the resource base, such as water, scenic quality, and public services
- g) changes induced in population distribution, population concentration, and the human use of the land, including commercial and residential development.

The documents must analyze any significant environmental effects the project might cause by bringing development and people into the area affected.

How will the growth-inducing impacts tax existing community services?

Where several measures are available to mitigate an impact, each should be identified. These measures must be fully enforceable.

Economic and social impacts on dividing a community must be included.

How does the project meet all civil rights and environmental justice requirements?

What reason requires you to have off/on ramps closer to each other than three miles?

The area south of the SJWA has way too many. What other impacts will be caused to the SJWA, Lake Perris, Lake Mathews Reserve and the SKR reserves?

Why can't the proposed road be moved to the southern border of the SIWA?

What limit will be put on commercial pole signs from commercial areas within two miles of the SJWA, Lake Perris, and Lake Mathews Reserve?

Please keep the Moreno Valley Group of the Sierra Club informed of all future meetings and related documents. Please send a hard copy of the Draft EIR/EIS as well as all maps in a size easily read and understood by the general public to the address listed below. Sincerely,

George Hague Conservation Chair

Moreno Valley Group of the Sierra Club

26711 Ironwood Avenue

Moreno Valley, California 92555-1906

Phone: 909-924-0816 Fax: 909-924-4185



Raymond F. Hicks Region Manager Public Affairs Department

December 20, 2004

Ms. Cathy Betchel
Riverside County Transportation Commission
4080 Lemon Street, 3rd Floor
P.O. Box 12008
Riverside, CA 92502-2208

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TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Subject: Notice of Preparation for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) for the Mid County Parkway Corridor Project

Dear Ms. Betchel:

There is no indication from the packet of any specific impacts to the Southern California Edison (SCE) facilities.

One statement on pages ten and eleven, "Potential impacts to public utilities include direct impacts where the transportation improvements may require relocation of existing facilities;" Due to scheduling requirements of our projects, and the upgrading of our transmission and distribution system, we request to meet with your planners as soon as the POTENTIAL IMPACTS to our system are identified.

Since the project does impact SCE facilities or its land related rights, please forward five (5) sets of plans depicting SCE's facilities and associated land rights to the following location:

Real Estate Operations Southern California Edison Company 14799 Chestnut Street, Westminster, CA 92683

Within 10 days after receiving the plans, the developer or their agent will be contacted by a representative from Real Estate Operations.

Thank you,

Ray Hicks

Region Manager

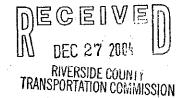
Southern California Edison

1351 East Francis St. Omtario, CA 91761-5715 909-930-8446/PAX 16446 Pax 909-930-8407 raymond.hicks@scc.com

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December 17, 2004



Robert Lopez Region Manager

Ms, Cathy Bechtel, Project Planner Riverside County Transportation Commission 4080 Lemon Street, 3th Floor Riverside, CA. 92502

Subject:

Mid County Parkway Corridor Project

Dear Ms. Bechtel:

Thank you for including the Southern California Edison Company (SCE) in the review process for the above-referenced document.

The Mid County Parkway Corridor project is located within the service territory of SCE and the electric loads of the project are within the parameters of the overall projected growth which we are planning to meet in this area. Unless the demand for electrical generating capacity exceeds our estimates, and provided that there are no unexpected outages to major sources of electrical supply, we expect our facilities to be sufficient to meet electrical requirements for the next several years.

The relocation, reconstruction, extension or under grounding of SCE's electrical distribution system which may be necessitated by activities within the proposed project area will be performed by SCE in accordance with SCE's effective Tariff Schedules approved by and filed with the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC).

In June 1994, the CPUC adopted General Order 131-D, which requires the CPUC to take an active role in the review and approval of investor-owned utility construction projects involving facilities between 50 and 200kV. While the CPUC has always had jurisdiction over these projects, it now requires formal CEQA environmental review of those projects by the CPUC, if they could have potentially significant impacts on the environment, unless a recognized exemption from CPUC review applies. If the Mid County Parkway Corridor project requires the relocation of sub-transmission and/or transmission facilities and compliance with G.O. 131-D, inclusion of the SCE facilities in the City's CEQA environmental review could qualify as such an exemption and expedite completion of the environmental review.

Therefore, in the event the project impacts SCE facilities or its land-related rights, please forward five (5) sets of plans depicting SCE's facilities and associated land rights to the following location:

Real Estate Operations Southern California Edison Company 14799 Chestnut Street, Westminster, CA 92683

Within 10 days after receiving the plans, the developer or its identified agent will be contacted by a representative from Real Estate Operations.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at

909-928-8208.

Very truly yours,

Poper I on

Region Manager

26100 Menifee Road Romoland, CA 92585-9752 951-928-8208 Fax 951-928-8308 robert.lopez@sce.com

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